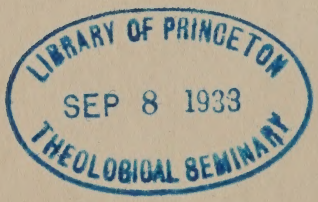
THE WAY

WILLIAM PIERSON MERRILL



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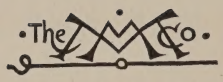

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THE WAY

Daily Meditations on the Way of Life According to Jesus

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BY

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MINISTER OF THE BRICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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FOREWORD

The most urgent need of Christianity today is to know and take the way of Jesus. We have worshipped Him, honored Him, defined our thought of Him in creeds. But we and our Christianity are being subjected by a critical world to the test of conduct. There is painful truth in the accusation that, like the Pharisees of old, we "say and do not."

This little book of devotion is sent out with a hope and a prayer that it may help to make the way of Jesus more clear through daily contact with His words, and may further that deeper and fuller companionship with Him which grows out of such study.

All references to sources of the prayers are intentionally omitted, that nothing may distract the mind from the simple devotional mood. Many of the prayers were written for this book; the rest are from the uncopyrighted, common treasury of the Church universal.

May the use of this little series of meditations help some Christians to "live in His light and walk in His ways."

William Pierson Merrill

THE WAY

FIRST WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
LUKE 6:46–49.

"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?"

What is wrong with our Christian civilization?

Why is our religion so powerless to set things right?

If Christianity is what it professes to be, a saving power from God for the redemption of the world, why have things come to such a pass? Why do wrongs linger, and rights tarry? One finds it hard either to answer or to forget the question a Chinese educator put at the outbreak of the war, "If Christ can't save us from this, is He a Saviour at all?"

There are many answers. We need to know and appreciate them all.

But one answer is basic. We do not take Jesus seriously. The indictment still holds which Tolstoi voiced a half century or more ago: "Christians do not think Jesus meant what He said."

It is good to call Jesus "Lord." To do that is to be orthodox. It is even better to call Him, "Lord, Lord." That adds piety to orthodoxy. But what He wants is that I shall act as if He really were my Lord. Unless my faith means that, my orthodoxy and my piety count for little or nothing.

"Bring forth the royal diadem," we sing, "and crown Him Lord of all." Does He care any more for diadems now than when He refused them in Galilee? What He wants most

is not that we should crown Him, but that we should obey Him.

O Lord God, our Father, order and hallow, direct and govern, our souls and bodies, our thoughts and acts, and all that we are and do this day and every day, to the end that we may live in Thy light and walk in Thy ways, according to the commandments of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIRST WEEK, MONDAY

"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" LUKE 6:46.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away." LUKE 21:33.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." JOHN 15:14.

What does Jesus Himself say as to the value and importance of His words?

On no subject does He speak more clearly, or with graver emphasis.

One saying almost takes away our breath: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." If any other man in human history had said such a thing, we would instantly condemn him as a lunatic or a colossal egotist.

But Jesus said it; and it is coming true. What, out of that first century world, has lasted as have His words? Certainly He could not more emphatically endorse the value of His sayings than by such an estimate.

He says that His words have wonderful power. Do we want rest, peace, contentment of soul? He says, "Learn of

me, and ye shall find rest." Do we seek fellowship with God, a real "experience of religion"? Jesus says, "If a man love Me, he will *keep My words,* and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." Are we really friends of Christ? What is the test? "Ye are My friends, if ye do what I command." By what criterion is our life finally to be judged? "The word that I speak shall judge you."

To the mind of Jesus nothing is more vitally important than that His followers shall do as He says.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we pray Thee, suffer us not to stray from Thee, Who art the Way, nor to distrust Thee, Who art the Truth, nor to rest in any other thing than Thee, Who art the Life. Teach us by Thy Holy Spirit what to do, what to believe, and wherein to take our rest. AMEN.

FIRST WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 7:21–27.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

There is a general conviction among Christians that Jesus was supremely good. There is no such general agreement that He was supremely wise. There lies our fatal weakness. We admire Jesus; we adore Him; but we do not accept His leadership as practical.

A young professor in an American college said of the brilliant, lovable, but erratic president of the institution, "I ad-

mire that man more than anyone else I know. But I wouldn't follow him across a turnip patch."

Is not that the way we too often think of Jesus? We admire Him beyond words. But we would not be such fools as to do actually what He says. We modify, explain, dilute, His sayings. We call Him "Lord," and then do as we please. Then we wonder why Christianity is so weak!

What is needed is not to take Him and His words literally. It works havoc always to take a poet literally; and the Master is preëminently a poet. We must keep our common sense and our imagination working in full play if we are to take Him and His words aright.

But we must take Him *seriously*. The faith needed today is that Jesus knew what He was talking about, and meant what He said.

> "And I remember still
> The words, and from Whom they came:
> 'Not he that repeateth the name,
> But he that doeth the will.' "

FIRST WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MARK 1:40–45.

What has this to do with us, this ancient tale of how Jesus healed a leper?

Give it a title! Call it, "The man who thought he knew better than Jesus."

That is the real point of the story. After healing the man, the Lord told him very clearly, rather severely, to tell no one about it. We can see the reason for the caution. The work

the Master had in hand just then demanded quietness rather than publicity. Too much advertising would spoil it. But the man did not realize that fact. He thought Jesus was too modest. He must tell the good news. So he did what Jesus had told him not to do. Result: just what the Lord had feared; curious crowds; no chance for His teaching; serious hindrance to His work.

This story is typical. All through the long history of Christianity we come upon men who think they know better than Jesus. They insist on doctrines and practices that He ignored. They pile ceremonies and creeds upon His simple Gospel, thinking thereby to add to its value and impressiveness. They leave His plain teachings unregarded, His commands unfulfilled. They do not trust His wisdom; they think they know better than He how to run the affairs of the world, and even the affairs of the church.

Let us not say "they." Let me ask, "Lord, is it I?" Do I obey the plain commands of Him I call Lord and Master? Or do I think I know better than He does?

Grant to us, our Father, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do anything that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIRST WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
JOHN 6:66–69.

Here is what is needed today above everything else; men and women who actually believe that Jesus has "the words

of eternal life," and will go to Him rather than to anyone else, because they are very sure He knows best how life should be lived.

It is amazing, it is challenging, to a professing Christian, to note what men who profess no Christian faith say about the wisdom of taking Jesus as our Leader.

John Stuart Mill cannot be accused of any bias in favor of orthodoxy. He said, "There could be no better rule of life, even for an unbeliever, than so to live that Christ would approve." In our own day, a brilliant writer, who reflects much of the attitude of our time, George Bernard Shaw, says in his dashing fashion, "I am no more a Christian than Pilate was, or you, gentle reader; and yet, like Pilate, I greatly prefer Jesus to Annas and Caiaphas; and I am ready to admit that after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will, if He had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman."

How can we, who do not hesitate to call Him "Lord," hesitate to take His way?

Lord, to whom shall we go, if not to Thee? We turn aside to other guides and teachers. Their new wisdom dazzles us, their confident words appeal to us. But they falter and give vague answers to our deepest questionings; we trust them, and they lead us astray. We stand alone in the dark. Then we turn back to Thee, and the light shines, and we see the way, narrow it may be and dim, but growing surer and brighter as we follow. Help us, O Lord, to "live in Thy light, and walk in Thy ways, according to the commandments of Jesus Christ our Lord." AMEN.

FIRST WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:1–10.

What is the first thing I need to know in order to live my life well? The answer is, How to be really, deeply, permanently happy. If "happy" seem too lighthearted a word, say "glad," or "joyful," or "blessed." But see that no tinge of unreality lingers about those more conventional words. It is significant that the stern old Puritans who sat at Westminster, preparing a catechism, put in the very first statement, dealing with the "chief end of man," the thought of endless enjoyment.

It is even more significant that Jesus began His great discourse on the mount with a word of joy. "He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed."

If I am to learn from Jesus the way of true life, one of the first lessons must be about the way of happiness. Who are the truly blessed people? What path will lead most surely to that deep and real joy that satisfies the heart? If Jesus cannot show me that, He is not the leader I need and want. If he can, then is He truly my Saviour.

Let me humbly ask Him to show me the way to be truly happy; and then let me take the way He shows.

O God, the Maker of all things, in Whom we live and move and have our being, Thou hast set me in a world rich in beauty, alive with truth, abounding in goodness. Give me, I pray Thee, eyes to see, a heart to feel, a nature quick to respond to all the richness of life joyously; that I may live in the gladness which Thy children should feel in the home of their Father. AMEN.

FIRST WEEK, SATURDAY

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." MATTHEW 5:12.

Should a Christian be happy? We might get varying answers to that question. Some have felt that Christians should be miserable. They have tormented themselves, denied themselves, afflicted their souls and their bodies, and thought they were doing God service. They have looked askance at joy and recreation and good humour. And many have been uneasy as they played, lest the solemn Judge and Taskmaster of life might condemn them for wasting their time.

But if we ask Jesus, we get a swift and sure answer. The Christian should be happy, as happy as he can be. Joy is a sure mark of a real Christian.

When our Lord began his great sermon, on the Christian Character and the Christian Way, its first word was "Blessed." That word "Blessed" has gathered about it a sort of halo. "Beatitude" somehow sounds unreal. We do not want "beatitude"; we want to be happy. The word Jesus used means just plain gladness, real joyousness. The first lesson He would have us learn is *how to be happy*. Christianity is, as someone has said, "The religion of salvation by joy."

A Christian should be happy. If he is not, there is something wrong with his religion, or with him.

"If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race,
And shown no glorious morning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain

Knocked on my sullen heart in vain;
Lord, thy most pointed pleasure take,
And stab my spirit broad awake;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose Thou, before that spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in."

SECOND WEEK, SUNDAY

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you; and that your joy might be full." JOHN 15:11.

Should a Christian be happy? Here is light, shining out from beneath the shadow of the cross. As the first word of the sermon that opened the ministry of Jesus is the word "Blessed," so this all but final word from the Upper Room is "Joy."

And between them lies the life of Jesus. "Man of Sorrows" we call him. A more fitting title, more consonant with fact, would be "the man whose sorrows could not kill his joy." Christ was the light, not the darkness, of the world. He brought light, not shade, wherever He went. You could tell the towns and country places where He had passed by the greater happiness and joy there. You can still tell the difference where He has come.

He was the very opposite of the recluse. He was pure, but not a Puritan; a saint, but not a separatist. He lived so wholesome, human, joyous a life that the ultra-good of His day called Him "glutton," "wine-bibber," "Sabbath-breaker." He mingled freely with all sorts of people, dined with them, entered into life all along the line. A wedding feast was merrier for His presence.

If I am to follow Jesus, I must be happy, joyous, bringing light, not shadow into life.

O God, Light and Life and Joy of the world, Thou knowest, even better than we know, how much there is in this world of needless gloom and shadow, bitterness and unhappiness. Give us grace to walk among our fellows as Jesus lived among men, bringing light not shade, joy not gloom. Through whatever country our path may lie, may we, by Thy grace, be enabled to walk with good cheer and courage, members of that blessed company, who, "passing through the valley of weeping, make it a place of springs." Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SECOND WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MARK 2:18–22.

"Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?"

Jesus rebukes, or corrects, those who think that, in order to be religious, one must be longfaced or mournful. Some very pious people see one group of religionists holding themselves aloof from common joys, looking solemn and mournful, denying themselves good food. They think, "How very religious!" Then they see another group, the disciples of Jesus, who seem to be having a good time. They live simply and plainly; but very evidently they enjoy life. Scandalized, the critics exclaim, "Why do not your disciples fast, as these others do?" The answer comes in words that mean, "They would, if it were natural to do so. Times of grief will come, and they will face them with sincere sorrow. But until

those sad times come, let them enjoy life; encourage them to take all the happiness that comes along."

That is always the attitude of Jesus and His true Gospel. The Christian should hail the innocent gladness of children, and the boisterous mirth of youth, as good evidences of the grace of the Living God. He should be eager to make the most of every joy that comes his way. Even his sorrows should not overwhelm his gladness.

"On whatever path we take, we shall meet thorns. But it is kingly to wear them as a crown."

O God, Who lovest sincerity, and hatest pretense, keep me from undue solemnity of manner this day and every day. Guard me from thinking that I can please Thee by assuming an unnatural gravity, or denying to myself or to others the grace of innocent laughter and good cheer. Help me to walk blithely, because the way is Thine, and Thou art with me. Even when life is hard, help me to wear the garment of praise over the spirit of heaviness, and so by my joy to glorify Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SECOND WEEK, TUESDAY

"If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." JOHN 13:17.

If a Christian should be happy, why do so many Christians "falter more or less in their great task of happiness?"

No! Let me think of myself, rather than of others. Why do *I* fail to be happy? Why do I not every day and at every moment "enter into the joy of my Lord?"

For two simple reasons: either I do not know Christ's way of happiness; or, knowing it, I will not take it.

That is what He said: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Sometimes I will not do what I know to be the will of Christ.

No one but myself can help me overcome that difficulty. I must work and pray, and seek the inward grace of God.

But sometimes I fail to know "what the will of the Lord is." That can be cured and changed by studying what He has said.

It is part of the Christian's business, part of my business as a Christian, to be ever "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," to give patient, steadfast attention to the things that He has said. Let that be a part of my daily program.

Send out Thy light and Thy truth, O God. Let them lead me. Help me to be faithful to what I know, and faithful also in seeking to know more, to see more truly, feel more deeply, understand more simply, what Jesus has revealed as Thy will and Thy way. "Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy paths." AMEN.

SECOND WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:1–10.

Today let me read through the Beatitudes, or repeat them, slowly and thoughtfully. A single great truth shines out from all of them taken together. They show clearly that, to the mind of the Master, *true happiness depends on inward condition, rather than on outward circumstance.* Indeed the only outward condition mentioned is the state of being persecuted!

It is not only Jesus who says this. Many a noble teacher tells us that the aids to real joy, like "the aids to noble life, are all within." William Lyon Phelps makes that one of the central messages of his delightful little essay on "Happiness." If the loss of my pocketbook, he says, can destroy my happiness, then clearly my happiness resides in my pocketbook instead of in my heart.

It is crystal clear from a reading of the Beatitudes that Jesus saw happiness as depending on what we *are,* rather than on what we *have.* Do I think of it in that way?

We miss every wicket gate of joy when we judge that it depends on outward conditions.

Not the outside of life, but the inside, is the place to look for the secret and sure way to real joy.

Forgive me, my Father, for the persistent childishness with which I seek my happiness in outward things. Help me, while rejoicing in all the good things Thou dost give us richly to enjoy, to lose my heart to none of them, but to keep it whole for Thee. So may my life be set and kept in the way of constant joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SECOND WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:1–10.

The idea may haunt us that Jesus' way of joy set forth in the Beatitudes is unreal, otherworldly, not for actual use every day.

Let us look and see. What would we naturally think would make for real happiness? Why, we answer, getting hold of the real goods of life. If we could win what is most worth while in life, we would be truly happy.

What would we count the real goods?

We answer—first of all to find the real meaning and value of life.

"Yes," says our Lord; "that is just what I say: Blessed are they who find the Kingdom of Heaven."

But, we reply, that has an otherworldly sound. We want the real values *here*.

"Yes," answers Jesus; "blessed are they who inherit the earth."

But, we protest; we want it less vague than that; we want to get real satisfaction.

"Yes," comes the answer; "blessed are they that are filled."

Do we think of insight, artistic joy, power to see the unseen? So does He. "Blessed are they that see God."

Do we think of the great value of love, favour, generous treatment, kindness shown us? So does He. "Blessed are they that obtain mercy." Do we think of honour, rank, position? So does He. "Blessed are they that are called Sons of God."

He adds one we might easily leave out. "You are sure to meet with hardship, pain, sorrow. Happy are those who are comforted, who know the secret of peace, consolation, fortitude."

Can I make a better list of the real goods of life? Are there any people surer to find real and lasting joy than those who have the good gifts Jesus here sets forth?

> "What souls possess themselves so pure?
> Or is there happiness like theirs?"

O God, set and keep my heart on the unseen things that abide. Deliver me from the tyranny of the outward and obvious, and set me free to serve the things of the spirit. So may

I find joy and peace that shall endure. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SECOND WEEK, FRIDAY

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." MATTHEW 5:3.

Notice the form of these wonderful sayings we call the Beatitudes. Each presents one particular sort of character or person who will be happy; and then gives a reason why that kind of person may expect to find joy.

Think of these as Jesus' directions for being happy. Study each with care.

Note this first one. It is in some ways the most vital of them all.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Does that mean the low-spirited, the mean-spirited, the dull, the apathetic? God forbid! Look at Jesus! He is the exemplar of all these characteristics. He was vivid, alert, keen, interested in life, daring, adventurous.

To be "poor in spirit" is to be humble, free from arrogance or self-importance. And such a soul will be free from some of the most persistent and powerful causes of unhappiness.

Self-pity, self-coddling, morbidity, these infallibly make for unhappiness. To be rid of all this brood of vices hatched by self-absorption is to be well on the way towards a happy life.

"Happy are the poor in spirit." They have escaped from their little cramped province into the broad spaces and free air of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Almighty God, Father of our spirits, Thou hast so made us that we can never find true rest and joy until we are at

home with Thee. Give us a vision of Thy Kingdom, that realm of the unseen and eternal where the soul may live with Thee. And, by Thy grace, so set us free from ourselves that we may be at liberty to enjoy Thee. This we ask in the name of Jesus, Thy Son, our Lord. AMEN.

SECOND WEEK, SATURDAY

"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." MATTHEW 5:10.

Two of the Beatitudes are closely connected through the fact that in each the special kind of person described is pronounced happy because he has "the Kingdom of Heaven," that is, the summum bonum, the prize best worth winning.

Who are they? We looked at one of them yesterday, the "poor in spirit." The other is the one who is "persecuted for righteousness' sake."

That means, does it not, that one of the men surest of real happiness is the one who can stand up and take hard blows for the sake of his convictions?

The point is not that it is better to be persecuted than to be free from persecution. The point is that, living in a world where right must make its way against opposition, the one who will endure hardship rather than weakly abandon his convictions is happier than the one who will yield his convictions rather than suffer.

The path to ease does not always lead to happiness. The pursuit of genuine joy is an exacting and adventurous expedition. A strange joy visits the heart of the man who dares stand for the right. It is after a son of man has fought with the devil that angels come and minister to him.

In this last of the Beatitudes is a corrective to false and

soft ideas of the first. That "poverty of spirit" that secures the Kingdom of joy is not synonymous with being poor spirited; for one must be able and ready to stand up and take hard knocks to win that prize.

Do you recall the heroic figure in Bunyan's allegory? Christian saw a man of very stout countenance walk up and say, "Put down my name, sir"; then he set his helmet and drew his sword, and after giving and receiving many blows, fought his way through. And the blessed ones within were heard chanting, "Come in! Come in! Eternal glory thou shalt win."

A glorious picture not only of heaven, but of real life, of the way to real joy.

Lift us up, O God of the brave, to the valour of soul that shall not be content to dwell safely forever in green pastures and beside still waters; but shall covet the deep and lasting joy of overcoming, the honor of treading in the footsteps of Him Who endured the cross, despising the shame, and won glory out of suffering. Help us in His name to be strong to endure. AMEN.

THIRD WEEK, SUNDAY

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." MATTHEW 5:4.

Can this mean that, in Jesus' view, it is happier to mourn than to rejoice? That is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of His teaching and of His life. The disillusioned devotee of self-indulgence may tell us that "it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting," but the true saints and the Master of the saints unite to call us to joy.

What then means this strange word?

This—that life is not built on lines of ease and continual pleasure. Hard facts and bitter experiences are in the way of us all. Who is surest to meet them rightly, to come through them to true joy and lasting happiness? He who tries to dodge them, to evade? No! He who looks them in the face, takes them in full meaning, goes through them with open eyes and mind.

That means sorrow, pain, grief. But it means at the end a *comfort,* a spiritual power and joy, never known to those who shut their eyes and try to slip past.

When sin, sorrow, pain, loss, plant themselves in my way, let me not turn aside to easier paths. So doing, I shall miss true joy, and wander in weakness. Let me see life as it is, taste the cup set to my lips, refuse to "make my judgment blind," or to call the bitter sweet; let me go on through, seeing it, bearing it, braving it; and there will come into my soul *comfort*—not merely consolation; for in that word "comfort" is the root of "fortitude."

"His way may lie through darkness,
But it leads to light at last."

God of all comfort, source of compassion, be with us, we pray, when we pass through sorrow and pain and grief. Help us to face them with honest, open gaze. So may we see shining through the clouds Thine ineffable light, and find the joy of being comforted of God.

"O joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be."

THIRD WEEK, MONDAY

"They shall inherit the earth." MATTHEW 5:5.

Such a phrase strikes strangely on the mind of many a conventional Christian. That shows how far our conventional Christianity has got away from the point of view of Jesus.

We expect Jesus to talk of inheriting heaven. If this verse ran, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall go to heaven when they die," it would better fit in with much of our exhortation and thinking.

We need to awaken to the truth that Jesus had His eye on this life; that His Gospel is a way of living now and here. Emerson may have overstated the case when he said, "Jesus never uttered a syllable about the duration of the soul"; but it is an overstatement rather than a misstatement. What the Master cared most about was the right living of this life. Heaven can be taken for granted by one who lives with God here.

How can I get the best out of these years, these opportunities, these experiences, these relationships, that make up my earthly life? In short, how can I "inherit the earth," so that I live on this earth as an heir on my Father's estate? That is a primary question. Jesus answers it in no uncertain terms. Let me understand clearly and unmistakably that to get the best and most out of my earthly life is one of my supreme religious concerns.

Creator and life of all things, Who didst call Thy world very good, make us worthy of this good world in which Thou hast set us, and help us to see and inherit as we pass through this life that in it which is truly blest. Grant us Thy unerring wisdom, that we may know how to reject the evil

and to cleave to the good; that our true riches may increase unto that life which is life indeed. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRD WEEK, TUESDAY

"The meek shall inherit the earth." PSALM 37:11.
"As for the mighty man, he had the earth." JOB 22:8.

Here are two sayings, both from the Old Testament. Which of them represents the judgment of average common sense? Which is truer to the facts of life? Do the meek get the best of this earthly life? Someone has cynically said: "The meek may inherit the earth; but the mighty take it away from them."

What is it to be "meek," as Jesus used the word? I form a mental image of the timid, gentle, shrinking soul, always getting out of the way of trouble, and label it, "The Meek."

Consider for a moment the two great men of God in the Biblical story who are called, par excellence, "the Meek." One is Moses, "the meekest of men." The other is Jesus, who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart."

Both of them were heroes. Both braved danger and death. Both awed mobs. Both faced tyrants. Both dominated and inspired hosts of followers. It is ludicrous to call either of them "meek" in the conventional sense. They belong to the noble band well called "The Terrible Meek."

For they were meek, as Jesus uses the word. He means by it the man who wholly forgets himself, loses himself, in his work, in his service of God, the wholly unselfish.

Such was Moses; such was Jesus. And such meekness wins the best that earth can give, and proves a sure way to the joy of life.

O Thou Who art heroic love, keep alive in our hearts that adventurous spirit which makes men scorn the way of safety, so that Thy will be done. For so only, O Lord, shall we be worthy of those courageous souls who in every age have ventured all in obedience to Thy call, and for whom the trumpets have sounded on the other side; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRD WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"Blessed are the meek." MATTHEW 5:5.

Am I really meek? Let me face my own heart and character today, and honestly answer that question. If I am not meek, then I am not as happy as I might be.

How much of my unhappiness springs from the fact that I cannot forget myself, leave my selfish wishes out of the account, turn self-pleasing out of the place of central importance in my scheme of things?

That is what it really means to be meek. And no one can be truly and lastingly happy who still puts self in the place of honour and importance. Tennyson's "Palace of Art" powerfully depicts the sure end of the self-centered soul, even if it be a gifted and artistic soul.

If I want to be really happy, I must learn to forget myself in the joy of serving something or someone greater and nobler. Jesus says in another place that only if we are "meek and lowly in heart," can we "find rest to our souls." And "rest to one's soul" is about the best gift one can find on earth. That true kind of meekness does inherit the earth.

We entreat Thy mercy with our whole heart, that as Thou defendest us against things adverse to the body, so Thou wilt

set us free from the enemies of the soul; and, as Thou grantest us to rejoice in outward tranquillity, so vouchsafe to us Thine inward peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRD WEEK, THURSDAY

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." MATTHEW 5:6.

Who are the truly happy people? Those who get what they want, most of us will say. There is a great truth in that answer. Much unhappiness comes from being disappointed.

Then if one is seeking the way to happiness, he should set before him an object which has two characteristics at least; it must be attainable; and it must give reasonable promise of bringing satisfaction with the attainment of it.

> "The world is so full of a number of things,
> I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

But out of that "number of things," a considerable quantity prove unattainable; and some disappoint us by turning to ashes when we get them in our grasp. One cannot walk the streets of the city and not meet many whose faces reflect the bitterness of failure, or the unsatisfactoriness of attainment.

Is there anything which has the two characteristics, attainability, and certainty to satisfy? Jesus says there is. It is righteousness. Those who seek that end "shall be filled"; and the attainment of their desire will make them happy.

Of how many objects of pursuit can that be said? The sure path to happiness lies straight through righteousness.

O God of strength, passing all understanding, Who mercifully givest to Thy people mercy and judgment; grant to

us, we beseech Thee, faithfully to love Thee, and to walk in the way of righteousness. AMEN.

THIRD WEEK, FRIDAY

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." MATTHEW 5:6.

Righteousness is the one object of pursuit which is sure of attainment and certain to satisfy the one who wins it.

Yes, but it is not easy to attain. You may say, "But I have wanted to be right; I have tried to be right; and I am not happy."

How much have you wanted it? As a hungry man wants food? As a thirsty man wants water? Go to a man who really thirsts, and offer him gold in place of water. He will fling it away. "I tell you I'm *thirsty;* give me *water.*" Have you wanted righteousness with that intensity?

Is my lack of righteousness a real and painful discomfort? Do I feel that I shall die if I do not get it? If so, I shall find it. For nothing is surer in God's universe than that those who want righteousness with all their souls will find their way to it. And it is equally sure that when they find it they will be happy in it.

To want to be right is the deepest, noblest instinct in the human soul. And the end of it is always joy.

O Thou Who art light, and in Whom is no darkness at all, enable us, we pray, to walk in the light as Thou art in the light; to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; that we may serve Thee in holiness and true righteousness all the days of our life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRD WEEK, SATURDAY

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." MATTHEW 5:7.

"They shall obtain mercy." Is not that a clear condition of happiness? All along my way I shall need mercy from my fellows. I cannot be happy without their consideration and kindly judgment. For I shall make mistakes, say foolish words, do the wrong thing, do the right thing in the wrong way or at the wrong time. I shall continually blunder, even when I do not deliberately choose wrong.

One of the surest conditions of real joy is then that I shall find mercy, kind judgment, generous treatment, from my friends and companions.

And if I need this at the hands of men, how much more at the hands of God! I can live in any sort of peace and happiness only if His mercy is ever around me, forgiving me, understanding me, helping me to try again.

Yes; "blessed are they that obtain mercy," as they move through this intricate business, this complex network of personal relationships, which we call life. To obtain kindly judgment from God and man is a rare and sure condition of true happiness.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, unto us who know that we are weak, and who trust in Thee because we know that Thou art strong, the gladsome help of Thy loving-kindness, both here in time and hereafter in eternity. AMEN.

FOURTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." MATTHEW 5:7. (*Read also* MATTHEW 18:21–35.)

Who of us will most surely find as he goes through life, that mercy which is one of the essentials of happiness?

"The merciful," Jesus answers. And our common sense renders the same verdict.

Who is most certain to be condemned by his fellows when he makes a slip, does or says something for which he needs forgiveness? Men will deal generously with all sorts of sinners, will pardon grave offenses, will overlook serious faults; but scarcely anyone will show mercy to one who is himself hard, ungracious, unforgiving, and mean. The man who shows no mercy has the whole community arrayed against him. "Serves him right," they will say when misfortune overtakes the hard man who has been unjust to his debtors, mean to his family, implacable to those who oppose his will.

But all will rally to help and comfort the generous, kind, sympathetic man or woman.

What of God and His Judgments? The answer is clear for one who sees as Jesus did. The one character the Master adjudged hopeless is the unloving, the ungenerous, the proud, the self-righteous, the unmerciful.

We cannot be happy without the continual kindly and generous judgment of God and man. And only the merciful can thus obtain mercy.

O God, every day we are in need of Thy forgiving grace, Thy generous judgment. We cry out to Thee for Thy forgiveness and mercy. Help us to know well that Thou canst

not show mercy to the unmerciful, nor forgiveness to the unforgiving; nor canst Thou be kind to the unkind. Help us so to look with kindly and generous judgment on our fellows that we may not fail of the divine mercy without which we are lost indeed. Make us merciful, that we may obtain mercy. AMEN.

FOURTH WEEK, MONDAY

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." MATTHEW 5:8.

What wonderful objects there are to see in this marvellous and rich world which God has made! What happiness it brings to see the mountains, the ocean, the setting sun, a beautiful city, a noble building—the great works of God, the great works of man.

Many of us are shut out from travel, from the joy of looking at the rare works of art, and the rare glories of nature.

But there is one object of vision more satisfying than any other, the contemplation of which brings the deepest and highest joy man can know. "To see God" is what the saints called "the beatific vision."

How could one fail to be happy, if he could *see God?* Back of all the problems of life, back of evil and distress, through all the clouds that darken our sky, through all our questioning and doubts, to see God, the Father; to know that

"behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch
above His own,"

that would bring such peace of mind, such confidence, that one could not help being happy.

"Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." That is still our prayer. And Jesus says that we can "see God," and so find happiness.

Set me free from all evil passions, and heal my heart of all inordinate affections; that, being inwardly cured and thoroughly cleansed, I may be made fit to love, courageous to suffer, steady to persevere. AMEN.

FOURTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." MATTHEW 5:8.

Who shall have that beatific vision of God which insures happiness? When Jesus answers "the pure in heart shall see God," it seems as if someone pointed to the top of a steep, lofty, inaccessible mountain, and said, "There you will find what you seek." We look up in awe, and look down in shame, and murmur, "It is high, I cannot attain unto it."

Yet we know that Jesus is right. To the impure, God and goodness are hidden. Read again two poems, Tennyson's "Vision of Sin," and Sidney Lanier's "How Love Looked for Hell." The impure soul is a clouded mirror which distorts beauty into grotesque forms. The pure heart is a clear glass that reflects the glory of the Lord. To be pure is to see God everywhere; and that means sure happiness.

I am not pure in heart: but I can want to be, and pray to be, and earnestly try to be. At least I can have that purity which means utter honesty of heart, opening the secret,

inmost nature humbly and sincerely to the light of God. "He that thus sets his hope on Him becomes pure even as He is pure." Let me honestly seek to be pure in heart, and, "though the vision tarry," at last it will come, and "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with His likeness."

O Thou Who inhabitest the high and holy place, let me hear Thy voice, saying, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." I confess with shame that I am not holy. But Thou hast promised also to dwell with him that is of a humble and contrite heart. Come and live in me, O spirit of purity and holiness, that I may know the joy of those who see God. AMEN.

FOURTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." MATTHEW 5:9.

Here, as in so many cases, Jesus contradicts the conventional thoughts of men, only to voice their deeper and better judgments.

Down through the ages, men have glorified the war-makers, and counted them the sons of God. Theirs have been the glittering names on the roll of fame.

But as man gains insight and soundness of judgment, he comes more and more to echo the saying of the Master, "Blessed are the makers of peace; they are the true sons of God."

We cannot forget that popular vote in France a score of years ago, when more than a million people cast their vote for the greatest French hero. It would seem a foregone conclusion that Napoleon's name would "lead all the rest." But lo! the leading name was that of Louis Pasteur, with Napoleon's a very bad second.

Those who make peace are the true sons of God. Even among the warmakers we honour most those who worked out just and lasting conditions of peace.

What a world this would be if, universally, the highest places were reserved for the makers of peace! They are already, in the hearts and minds of good and right-thinking men. When the whole world comes to that estimate, humanity will be well on the way to happiness.

"Spirit of righteousness and love,
Our wisdom and our faith increase,
That we may be true sons of God,
The makers of eternal peace."

FOURTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." MATTHEW 5:9.

What is it to be a peacemaker? Is it the same as being peaceable, amiable, gentle?

Not at all. To make peace is a stern business at times. It is not strange that Jesus followed this Beatitude with one about being "persecuted for righteousness' sake." One who would help to make peace must be ready to fight hard, to endure pain and misunderstanding. Jesus is the "Prince of Peace"; and we know the way He had to take. The way to peace is the way of the cross.

We have thought of the making of peace as men used to think of the making of the world. "Let there be peace; and there was peace." We have learned that God did not so make the world by an easy word, and a wave of the hand. The world is being made by slow, hard, patient toil, by

divine ingenuity, by indomitable perseverance. So must peace be made. It takes sons of God to make peace, spirits that have caught from God something of His unyielding hope and His unfailing patience. If I want to be happy, to find ever-deepening satisfaction, through growing assurance that I am working with the infinite God, let me play my little part in this great work of making peace, God's own work, in which His sons find joy.

O God, in Whose will is our peace, give us courage and resolution, unselfish devotion and clear vision, that by the grace of Thy Spirit in our hearts and in our acts we may help on Thy great work of bringing peace on earth and good will towards men. AMEN.

FOURTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35.

Here is more light from Jesus as to the way that leads to joy. Like other familiar sayings this has become case-hardened by frequent use, so that we find it hard to break through to the real meaning.

The word "receive" is unfortunate. The true contrast is not between giving and receiving. Jesus does not say anything so banal as that the giver is happier than the recipient. Even if that be true, it is utterly unimportant.

Moffatt's translation gives the true sense: "To give is happier than to get."

Getting and giving: these are two parts of our experience. Each is important. Each brings joy.

It is blessed to *get:* knowledge, culture, ease, influence,

wealth, all sorts of good things. They are God's good gifts, and should be taken by us with innocent gladness and satisfaction.

And yet it is *more* blessed to *give*. Deeper joy, more real and lasting satisfaction, comes from giving, from service, from sacrifice, than from acquiring goods.

Both are necessary; we need to get if we are to have anything to give. We need to give if getting is to be of real value.

Both bring joy. But the deeper joy comes from giving. The happiest people are the generous. The path to genuine joy lies through the country of giving.

O God, Who hast taught us to keep all Thy heavenly commandments by loving Thee and our neighbour; grant us the spirit of peace and grace, that we may be both devoted to Thee with our whole heart, and united to each other with a pure will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FOURTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35.

There was a little boy who was very fond of flowers. He played and worked in a garden where a number of children had each his own flower bed. But while the other beds were gay with flowers, this little fellow's plot had few blossoms on it. For no sooner did they appear than he picked them and gave them away. He was always giving flowers to all sorts of people. The other children laughed at him and at the lack of flowers in his garden.

Then came "God's kindest angel" and led him home. There the little boy saw gardens of flowers so rich and beautiful that he cried out for joy. He found himself stand-

ing before one plot covered with exquisite blooms. And a kindly voice said, "This is yours; the flowers that were left unpicked delighted their owners for a few days and then perished. But every flower you gave away made one more blossom in your eternal garden."

O God, Who hast filled our life with blessed and joyous gifts, grant that we may not miss the joy that comes from generous giving, but may ever grow in likeness to our Father, Who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." MATTHEW 5:13–16.

Why is it that Christianity has so little influence? We may well raise that question over and over. It is a serious and painful question for anyone who really loves Christ and believes that Christianity is the hope of the world. Christianity has been working here for nineteen hundred years, and at the end has come a ghastly war, and many serious evils are still potent. Why hasn't Christianity more influence?

Jesus gives a clear answer in a simple saying, "Ye are the salt of the earth, the light of the world."

The very first teaching that meets us in these simple words is in the first word, "Ye." Christianity can have influence *only through Christians.* "*Ye* are the salt." "*Ye* are the light." "*Thou* art Peter." "*Ye* are my witnesses." "Go *ye* into all the world." There is nothing plainer or surer in all the Gospel than that Christ depends on Christians to extend Christian influence.

Woodrow Wilson, when president of Princeton, once said to a gathering of alumni, "You ask us why we do not make more out of your sons. I will tell you why: it is because they are *your sons.*"

Why has Christianity so little power? Because it is *my* religion. What am I doing about it, saying for it? How much am I witnessing for Christ?

When I ask, "Why has Christianity so little influence?" let my next question be, "Lord, is it I?"

> "What kind of a church would our church be
> If every member were just like me?"

O God, Who art the light of the minds that know Thee, the life of the souls that love Thee, and the strength of the thoughts that seek Thee; help us so to know Thee that we may truly love Thee, and so to love Thee that we may truly serve Thee, Whose service is perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTH WEEK, MONDAY

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." MATTHEW 16:18.

We often miss the meaning of this historic scene, when Jesus turned to His most outspoken follower, and said, "Thou

art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." We think of Peter, the first Pope; or Peter, the leader at Pentecost; or Peter, the great apostle. There is a better and more wholesome way to take it; and that is to see our Lord looking straight at the typical disciple, at each and every one of us, saying, "You are Peter, John, Henry, Mary, Martha, Joan —and on *you* I will build my church." It is the very secret of the success of Christianity that *every Christian* shall feel that it *all depends on him.*

Here lies the difference between the successful and the unsuccessful in any sphere; the one says, "Someone will do it; why should I?" The other says, "Someone must do it; why not I?"

Which is your spirit? Which way do you put the question?

Christ depends on Christians for influence over human life. Men do not read the Bible half so much as they read us.

What sort of estimate will men form of Christ and His religion from *reading me?*

O Spirit of God, Who hast made us living epistles, to be known and read of all men, grant, we beseech Thee, that all who come to know us, may through us come to know Thee. Help us so to live, this day and every day, that our every act may commend our faith and our God to all who know us; through the grace that is in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." MATTHEW 5:13–16.

Jesus gives us two symbols, or pictures, of the influence we should exert. He says we are to be *salt,* and *light.*

I am a Christian in order to give salt to life, to add a flavor, a wholesome taste, a saving grace, to the life about me. Salt is the perfect symbol of the silent, unobtrusive influence of character, of *what we are.* Salt makes a mighty difference in the flavour and wholesomeness of food. A child once said: "Salt is what makes food taste bad, when you don't put it in."

Yet, necessary and wholesome as salt is in food, it is very disagreeable when it obtrudes itself. Self-conscious piety, like that of the Pharisees, is offensive as a lump of salt in ice cream. The best piety flavours life so that people enjoy it and find it good, giving scarcely a thought to the salt that savours it. The function of the Christian is so to mingle with life that men shall find life purer, lovelier, more enjoyable, cleaner, for the saving salt of their character. Robert Louis Stevenson says that one of the functions of a gentleman is "to make on the whole a family happier for his presence." That is one of the functions of the Christian, to make the world better and happier by his presence.

Lord, help us so to live that men and women and children, whether they notice us or not, will feel that life is rich and wholesome and good, because in it they catch the flavour of a real faith, which makes all of life more blessed and desir-

able. And this we ask in the name of Christ, Who so lived that men saw the beauty of living. AMEN.

FIFTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"Ye are the salt." MATTHEW 5:13.

How far am I really putting the salt of Christian spirit into the life of my home, my office, my shop, my study, my circle of friends?

Just imagine that today every Christian in America should go to his work, and live through the whole day, in business, social life, everywhere, in the full savour and grace of a Christly character; would not the sun go down on the happiest, best day this country has ever known?

One of the most beautiful tributes ever paid to a human being was a note in a Boston paper to this effect: "Yesterday opened dull and depressing; but about noon Phillips Brooks came down town and everything brightened up."

If I am really a Christian, people should miss me as they miss salt from their food; and know my presence, not by noticing me, but by feeling that life is fine, and rich; that there is zest and joy and courage in life, because Christians are there.

You could tell where Jesus had been, by the difference He made just "passing through."

What would happen, if I were like Him?

O God of love, Who hast given a new commandment, through Thine Only-begotten Son, that we should love one another, even as Thou didst love us, the unworthy and the wandering, and gavest Thy beloved Son for our Life and

salvation; we pray Thee, Lord, give to us Thy servants, in all time of our life on the earth, a mind forgetful of past ill will, a pure conscience and sincere thoughts, and a heart to love our brethren. AMEN.

FIFTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:13–16.

Ever since Christ came, the salt of Christian love and service has been at work, leavening human relations and society.

Dr. William R. Richards drew this striking contrast:

There is a well-known picture of "The Appian Way." It shows a haughty woman of ancient Rome, driving furiously along the crowded road; the people, in a panic, flee from the rushing wheels; one old man has fallen under the hoofs of the horses. No one seems to care.

Today in New York, on a crowded avenue, one hears a clanging bell, and a vehicle dashes past, all the traffic making way. What is it? An ambulance, on its way to pick up some poor victim of an accident, to carry him where the best skill and care will be freely at his service.

"Look on this picture, and on that."

Has not the Christian spirit made a difference?

Forgive us, O God, that we have not given the loving spirit of Thy Son our Lord free course in our lives, but have hampered and chilled it by our selfishness. May all our contacts with our fellow men bring into their life something of the savour of the salt of Christliness, that so the spirit of our Lord may have its full work in our world. AMEN.

FIFTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" MATTHEW 5:13.

What could be more utterly useless than salt that had lost its savour? Nothing—unless a Christian who had lost his Christian character and distinctiveness.

If we are to play the part of salt, to exert the silent, pervasive influence of Christian character, to produce "good taste" in the general community life, we must be very careful to keep up our distinctive Christian quality.

Some intelligent non-Christians in India spoke recently with warm appreciation of the "permeative influence" of Christianity in their national life. Someone asked, "Should Christianity soften or dilute its message, in order to do more effectively this work of permeation?" With one voice they answered, *"No."* It is, they said, precisely through being itself, positively, outspokenly, uncompromisingly, that Christianity has gained, and can gain, growing influence over other religions, and over the common life of India.

Grant to us Thy children, O Lord, set as we are in surroundings that continually tempt us to dilute our convictions, or to lose our firm hold on ideals, that we may, by Thy grace, hold high without faltering or fear the banner of faith, that others may see and believe. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:14, 15.

"Ye are the light *of the world."*

Christians are to be *light,* as well as salt. Light is the perfect symbol of outspoken influence, as salt is of the silent kind. Light "cannot be hid."

If Christianity is to have influence, it must speak out, bear witness, shine and not fear. It is more than a flavour for common life. It is a challenge, a searching ray, a beacon, a forthsetting of definite ideals. "Let the redeemed of the Lord *say so*"—not merely live so.

How much the world owes to men and women who would not keep still, who, like Jesus, "could not be hid," who would not "fold the hands and acquiesce," but would "stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's name." How great our debt to those who would say what they think.

Erasmus was salt; Luther was light. Lincoln had the salt of character and humour; but he had also the light of positive action and testimony, that could not be hid.

How well am I playing the part of light? Do I ever say a brave word for Christ? Do I speak out against evil and for righteousness?

Forgive me, O my God, that so often through fear or shame or indolence I leave unspoken the word of witnessing that might have awakened some soul to the reality of Thy presence and Thy life. Make me at once humble and outspoken, simple and brave, and number me among those faithful servants who have not failed to make known to men Thy word and Thy will. AMEN.

SIXTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"A city set on a hill cannot be hid." MATTHEW 5:14.

It is interesting that Jesus takes as symbols two kinds of light.

One is the *light of the city.* Galilee was thick with large towns. At night Jesus could see their lights gleaming through the darkness. So should Christianity shine out; the church should be like "a city set on a hill."

An American once was telling an Englishman of the lights of Broadway. He told of one great advertising sign which had in it more than one hundred and twenty thousand lights. The Englishman answered, "Do you know, I should think it would be rather conspicuous." Of course it was; that was the object. And Christianity ought to be conspicuous—not spectacular, but so clearly displayed that no one could help seeing it.

"Rise up, O men of God!
The church for you doth wait,
Her strength unequal to her task.
Rise up, and make her great!"

O God, Who didst command light to shine out of darkness, Thou hast shined in our hearts, that we might give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Keep us, we pray, from dimming that light. Help us to keep it bright and to let it shine, that men may see our good works, and glorify Thee. AMEN.

SIXTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:15.

The second symbol Jesus uses, in bringing out the meaning of His great word, "Ye are the light of the world," is the candle or lamp.

The city lights are impressive. But how much value and comfort there is in the candle or lamp in the home! So Christianity should be not only a glorious inspiration of the large, common life; but a quiet, helpful aid to every little group, an indispensable "concern of the particular hearth and home."

Christianity has spread through the shining lights, Brooks, Drummond, Moody, Wesley, Luther, Wiclif, Saint Francis, and a host of others, who shine like great beacons that cannot be hid. But it has spread at least as much, probably far more, through the simple candlelight in innumerable homes. Not every Christian can build a city on a hill; but every Christian can light a candle.

Lord, though I be but a tiny rushlight, use my spirit as a candle of the Lord. Thou dost not quench the dimly burning wick. Strengthen and brighten the poor flame of my witnessing for Christ, that those who know me best may love Thee the better for knowing me. And this great boon I ask in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

SIXTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel." MATTHEW 5:15.

What a foolish thing to do with a light! To put a bushel basket over it would do one of two things: either quench the flame, or set fire to the basket.

That is just what happens when men try to hide new light under a bushel. When new ideas come to light, how many leaders, political, financial, ecclesiastical, hunt about desperately for a bushel to put over it; and the result is often a conflagration, which threatens the safety of the whole house.

The only safe, sane way is to set the light on a stand, where it belongs, and let it shine. The world needs Christians who are not afraid of the light.

"Then, God of Truth, for Whom we long,
Thou Who wilt hear our prayer,
Do Thine own battle in our hearts,
And slay the falsehood there.

Yea, come; then, tried as in the fire,
From every lie set free,
Thy perfect truth shall dwell in us,
And we shall live in Thee."

SIXTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:13–16.

To have the best influence, a Christian must be both salt and light. Without the character, the words are worthless. "What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say." But without the word of outspoken witnessing, the character has only half its possible influence. What we are derives much of its value from the effect it can give to what we say. Beyond doubt the strongest and most lasting influence in the home is the quiet, steady example of father and mother. But how it clinches that influence, and drives home its meaning, when, on top of that influence of character, comes at times the straight-out word, the witness to religious truth and high ideals.

Am I ready to speak out? We admire the wit and wisdom of the answer an old saint gave to an officious evangelist, who asked if he had any religion: "None to speak of, sir." Perhaps we admire it too much. We ought, every Christian of us, to have religion to speak of: not flippantly, not officiously; but seriously, when occasion calls; and we shall hear occasions calling, if we hearken.

"This is my creed;
This is my deed:
Faith, or a doubt,
I shall speak out,
And hide not my heart."

SIXTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:13–16.

How much real witnessing is there today on the part of Christians, quiet, but definite? How many times have I gone out of my way, or even used the openings that came in my way, during the last week, the past year, to bear definite testimony to Christ, and to my faith in Him? We are broad and tolerant in these days. That is good; but, if we are not careful, we shall let our breadth degenerate into what Browning so well calls "a lazy glow of benevolence."

Bishop McConnell touches the conscience when he says: "During the Boxer rebellion hundreds, yes, probably thousands of Chinese Christians were martyred. There they knelt, with their heads on the blocks, and the knives trembling in the hands of the executioners. All they needed to do was to grunt out a Chinese word that meant 'I recant' and their lives would be saved. Now, what should I have done under these circumstances? And I speak not simply personally, but in a representative capacity, for I think the rest of you are very much like myself. With my head on a block, I think I should have said, 'Hold on! I think I can make a statement that will be satisfying to both sides.'"

Does not that keen thrust strike our conventional Christianity to the heart? How many of us have that courage of faith that will not compromise, or keep still?

O God, Thou art calling today for witnesses, who shall not be afraid or ashamed to confess their faith before all the world; who shall speak the quiet word at the right mo-

ment, that shall set in motion forces that no man can measure. Give me, O God, the courage to join that blessed company of faithful witnesses, who are the strength of Thy Kingdom. In Jesus' name I ask it. AMEN.

SIXTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:14–16.

We are the light of *the world* today, as never in the past. For the whole world knows us, and judges our religion by us. Once, not so long ago, we could send out a few hand-picked saints to represent Christianity to the people in some Chinese or Japanese town, or some remote corner of our own land. They won the people by the rare quality of their Christianity. But now the whole world is at everybody's door. A Japanese official was asked recently why Christianity does not make greater progress in that empire. With an apologetic gesture he said, "We are coming to know too many Christians." No longer do the people in Asia or Africa or in small towns in America judge Christianity by a few hand-picked Christians. They judge by what they read in the papers, and hear from the radio, and see in films and plays, and gather from the thousands of traders and tourists and politicians who wander over the world. We can no longer send a little choice salt, or set up a lonely ecclesiastical candlestick, to represent Christianity here or there. The world is looking at us all, judging Christianity by what we are and say and do.

"By all ye will or whisper;
By all ye leave or do,

The silent, sullen peoples
Will judge your God and you."

The world needs all the salt of Christian character, all the light of Christian witnessing, it can get from all the Christions in it. What am I doing to meet that need?

Give me, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downwards; give me an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; give me an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside.

Bestow upon me also, O Lord my God, understanding to know Thee, diligence to seek Thee, wisdom to find Thee, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace Thee. AMEN.

SIXTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:17–20.

There is no clearer evidence of the divine wisdom of Jesus than His exposition of the principles along the line of which progress can safely be made.

How can we wisely move on out of the old into the new? How can I go on to larger thoughts, to new ways and standards, without losing touch either with the good of the past or with the living pioneers who are moving on?

Here we face one of the most acute problems of the present age. Between the champions of the new and the defenders of the old, the world is being rent asunder. At one extreme stand the ardent advocates of a new order, impatient at any restraining hand laid on them in the name of the past. At the other extreme stand the inflexible partisans

of things as they are, and things as they have been, determined to resist all change, ready to cry "Bolshevist," "Radical," "Heretic," if one dare suggest that some new ideas or ways might be approved. Where can we find the right path?

Here, as everywhere, Jesus is "the Way." Let me think out the problem as it affects me, and then lay it before Him, with a prayer that He show me what to do.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we pray Thee suffer us not to stray from Thee, Who art the Way, nor to distrust Thee, Who art the Truth, nor to rest in any other thing than Thee, Who art the Life. Teach us by Thy Holy Spirit what to believe, what to do, and wherein to take our rest. For Thine own name's sake we ask it. AMEN.

SEVENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:17–20.

Realize that Jesus faced in His own day a problem not unlike that which we confront. On the one side stood the religious reactionaries and the social standpatters, the scribes and the priests, bent on keeping things as they were, dwelling among the tombs of their ancestors. On the other side were the restless radicals, the zealots always ready for a revolution, the turbulent Galileans, the mass of the discontented waiting for a leader. He saw how easily they might take Him for a revolutionist. Matthew Arnold has caught the inner meaning of the scene:

"The Master stood upon a mount and taught;
He saw a fire in His disciples' eyes;

'The old law,' they cried, 'is wholly come to naught;
Behold the new world rise!' "

So He gave them true directions about the way of right progress. Three plain principles He lays down: "Not to destroy, but to fulfil"; "Not to break commandments, but to keep on doing and practicing them"; "To exceed the Scribes and Pharisees in righteousness."

Had the men of His day accepted those simple profound principles, their nation might have continued, and the Kingdom of God have come with power. Should all in our day accept them, and live by them, we should see the new order we long for emerging readily and triumphantly from the old order.

Make us of quick and tender conscience, O Lord; that, understanding, we may obey every word of Thine this day, and discerning, may follow every suggestion of Thine indwelling Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SEVENTH WEEK, MONDAY

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." MATTHEW 5:17.

True progress is made not by destroying, but by fulfilling. That is the first teaching the Master gives about progress.

One of the most seductive temptations that beset the man, the group, the party, that eagerly desires the new light, the changed order, is the temptation to spend time and energy in mere attack upon the old, in pulling down and rooting up.

Christ tells us that the true way is to make the old change

naturally into the new, to carry on the values of the old into the new, to develop the better way and leave the old to adapt itself, as it always will.

One serious reason for the tenacious and often successful defense of positions that ought to be abandoned, is that so often liberals, progressives, do little more than attack old customs and sacred traditions. We weary of the reactionaries whose motto is, "Whatever is, is right"; but equally foolish and dangerous is the radical who insists that "whatever is, is wrong."

Am I content to destroy, to attack, to break down the old? That is not the way of Jesus.

O God our Father, Who art, and Who wast, and Who art to come, enable us, because we reverence Thee, to look with reverence upon the past, the present, and the future, knowing that Thou dwellest in them all. Help us to conserve with patience the values of the past, and never lightly to let go the gains so hardly won by Thy chosen children, while still keeping touch with our God, Who is marching on. In the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

SEVENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." MATTHEW 5:17.

This principle of Jesus is the principle on which God has worked through the ages. His way is not to wipe the slate clean and start anew, but patiently to work out the problem bit by bit, to change *what is* into *what ought to be* by slow degrees; not to clear the ground with dynamite, but to foster growth.

It is as futile as it is natural, to cry:

"Ah, love, could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire?"

According to the Bible story, God tried that method once. He swept things away with a flood, and started again. But the conduct of the one family saved as a nucleus of the new order was no improvement on the old: and God set His bow in the sky to testify that never again would He take that method of "shattering and remoulding," but would trust to "seed time and harvest, and cold and heat"—in short to growth and time.

No one is fit to advocate and work for a new order in church, or state, or society, or school, who lacks reverence for the old, and fails to cherish and carry on its virtues and values.

Patiently and silently, O God, Thou workest Thy will, and, through the long ages, bringest good out of evil. Fill us with Thy spirit, that we may not fail nor be discouraged, but may ever cleave to that which is good while pressing on to that which is better, in the spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SEVENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." MATTHEW 5:17.

This principle, "not to destroy, but to fulfil," of building the right and leaving the wrong to decay, applies even to our dealing with glaring evils and abuses. There are better ways of getting rid of these than by frontal attack.

Bishop McConnell gives a striking illustration: "When I was a boy," he says, "I used to look with fascinated awe at the pictures of prehistoric monsters, and wonder how the world ever rid itself of such gigantic and powerful creatures. But when I grew older, and read more, I learned that they were never destroyed by direct attack. *The climate changed and they died.* It is the business of Christianity to change the climate so that some things will die."

God bless and strengthen those who ride out like knights-errant to attack war, poverty, injustice, and all evil. But for every one of these there is need of thousands who will take the way of Jesus, changing the climate so that evils will die, and right things will grow.

What am I doing to change the climate around my life, so that the fruits of the spirit may have a chance to ripen?

We beseech Thee, O Lord, be gracious to Thy people, that we, leaving day by day the things which displease Thee, may be more and more filled with the love of Thy commandments, and, being supported by Thy comfort in this present life, may advance to the full enjoyment of life immortal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SEVENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." MATTHEW 5:18, 19.

What does Jesus mean by these words about breaking and keeping the commandments? No one knew better than He that the one New Commandment of love was about to take the place of the ancient Ten Commandments, that His ideal of simple heart fellowship with the Father would supersede all the elaborate worship system of Judaism. Yet He saw the danger, if men should fling away the old standards and practices and codes, before the new should have taken on compelling shape and clarity. And so He said, "Do not break the old laws! Keep on teaching them, doing them, so long as they work. Otherwise the new Kingdom shall never be yours."

That wisdom is needed today. "Puritan ideas and Victorian standards are outdated." Yes. But have you others to put in their place? To give up, in the name of progress, old habits and ways of Sabbath keeping, Bible reading, prayer, church going, and the like, when one has nothing to put in their place, is folly. It means loss, not gain; degeneration, not progress.

Am I holding to the good of the past until I have something better to put in its place?

Open our eyes, O Lord, and fill us with the spirit of fearlessness, that we may follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, even though we are led into strange and new and untried places. But enable us also, by Thy grace, to guide our way by the kindly light of the best we know, that we may not stray from the blessed country of the truth, but may enter more deeply into it every day. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, Thy Son. AMEN.

SEVENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" LUKE 16:12.

Here is a needed warning to the eager spirit of our age.

We want "our own." One of the magic words is "self-expression." We want a faith of our own, no mere repetition of past creeds; a religion of our own, no mere keeping up of ancient ritual; a life of our own, no copy of old ways and doings.

Yes; but we must start with the faithful use of "that which is another's." The youth at school must find knowledge that is "his own," else his education fails. But he works his way into it through faithful use of the knowledge others have found.

So we must begin with prayers our mothers teach us, creeds that great thinkers have wrought, ways of worship that have proved themselves. For only as we are faithful in that which is another's, can we ever come to that which is our own.

Long for the better way, the purer faith, the nobler worship, the fairer social order, that is to come. Refuse to halt short of that. But play fair with what you have, or you will never reach the better that you desire.

O Lord, do Thou create in our hearts a sincere desire to become better, and a steadfast resolution to endeavour to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SEVENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." MATTHEW 5:20.

One more principle of progress our Lord sets forth. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

In that saying is made clear what we often forget, that the ultimate test whether the old or the new is better and shall prevail is the test of the *product of each*. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

" 'Was it,' the Lord then said, 'with scorn ye saw
The old law observed by Scribes and Pharisees?
I say unto you, see ye keep that law
More faithfully than these.'
So Christ said nineteen hundred years ago,
And what shall then be said to those today
Who cry aloud to lay the old world low,
To clear the new world's way?
Ah, from the old world let some one answer give,
'Scorn ye this world, their tears, their inward cares?
I say unto you, See that your souls live
A deeper life than theirs.' "

Am I a champion of the old ways and thoughts? Let me know that they can be upheld only by clear proof that they lead to better living than do the new ways. Am I an eager partisan of the new? I can advance my side only by plain proof that it will produce a righteousness that exceeds

that of the adherents of the old order. That is the way the world will ultimately judge; for that is how God judges.

Almighty God, Who alone gavest us the breath of life, and alone canst keep alive in us the breathing of holy desires, sanctify all our thoughts and endeavours, that we may neither begin any action without a pure intention, nor continue it without Thy blessing; may we in heart be inspired by Thy wisdom, and in work be upheld by Thy strength, and in the end be accepted by Thee as Thy faithful servants, having done all things to Thy glory, and thereby to our endless peace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

EIGHTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:21–26.

What is the way of Jesus in the matter of our relations with other people?

There is nothing of greater practical importance for every one of us. Our success in business, our comfort at home, our satisfaction in social life, our joy everywhere, depend on our finding and keeping the way of right relations with people.

Jesus' teaching on this point is concrete and clear. Sometimes people complain that the teachings of Jesus are vague, indefinite, idealistic, impractical. Well, there is nothing vague here. The way is clear and open and straight.

The first and most basic direction Jesus gives is that we get inside our own hearts, and deal with our own souls. And we must deal with them thoroughly. We must not allow hard and hateful feelings to linger and rankle and grow. We must feel towards hate and revenge and envy and

bitterness something of the revulsion which right human nature feels towards murder.

Jesus sends us in and back to the sources. Is something wrong between me and someone else? Let me deal with myself, before I try to deal with him. The first condition of right relations is to be right in my own heart, and in my view of the other person.

O Lord, give us more charity, more self-denial, more likeness to Thee. Teach us to sacrifice our comforts to others, and our likings for the sake of doing good. Make us kindly in thought, gentle in word, generous in deed. Teach us that it is better to give than to get, better to forget ourselves than to put ourselves forward; better to minister than to be ministered unto; even as we have been taught by Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

EIGHTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:21–26.

Jesus' second direction for the way of right personal relations is that we should see that this is one of the most important, vital concerns of our life.

He makes this very clear by saying that it is even more important to have things set right between one's self and others than it is to worship God. What a teaching to come from the founder of a religion! "If you are bringing your gift to the altar, and remember that your brother has something against you; go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Putting that in modern form, it means, "If you are in church, ready to worship, and re-

member that there is something wrong between you and your brother, go, set that right before you worship."

If that counsel were taken literally some Sunday morning, a large number of attendants might suddenly leave the church.

Am I caring more about keeping right, loving, kind, fair relations between myself and all other people, than about anything else, even my creed or my religion? If not, am I in the way of Jesus? Is not His teaching clear?

O God of love, Who hast given a new commandment, through Thy Son, that we should love one another, even as Thou hast loved us; we pray Thee give to us, Thy children, in all time of our life on the earth, a mind forgetful of past ill, a pure conscience and sincere thoughts, and a heart to love our brethren; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

EIGHTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:21–26.

The third counsel Jesus gives about right personal relations is that we be very careful and quick to handle any misunderstanding at its very outset, knowing that if we do not it may readily drift into a more and more serious condition. "Agree with thine adversary at once, lest he deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the jailer, and you be put in prison." Take hold of any misunderstanding at once, for, if left to grow, it will soon get beyond your power to deal with it.

Have you seen Galsworthy's play "Justice?" It is a ter-

rific setting of the illustration Jesus uses. Once let the process start, and it grinds on, and you are helpless.

So it is with misunderstandings. Permanent breaks have come out of "little rifts." Tragic situations, lasting bitternesses, when all might easily have been averted had one or the other really tried to set things right *at the outset,* when feeling was still plastic. Take misunderstandings at the start; nip them in the bud. That is the way of wisdom, in the home, in the shop, everywhere.

O holy and ever-blessed Lord, teach us, we beseech Thee, to love one another, to exercise forgiveness and forbearance toward our enemies, to recompense no man evil for evil, but to be merciful even as Thou, our Father in heaven, art merciful: that so we may continually follow after Thee in all our doings, and be more and more conformed to Thy likeness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

EIGHTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 18:15–17.

Here our Lord makes clear a perfectly definite procedure when personal relations take the wrong course.

First, He assumes that you will make sure that you are in the right spirit yourself. Otherwise the method will not work. But, if that is sure, then you should *go and have the matter out with the person involved in private, before telling anyone else about it.*

If that fails, and you cannot handle it alone, call in trusted friends to help.

If that fails, then, *and only then,* take steps to let it be

known publicly, and to use processes of legal or ecclesiastical settlement. Only when all that has failed, may you give up. And, even then, you must do no more than break off personal relations with the one you cannot win.

It is safe to say that, if all of us followed that way, ninety-nine out of every hundred misunderstandings would be cleared up. There are homes where husband and wife are estranged, that would be healed and whole again, were this way honestly taken.

Have I any personal relation that is wrong? If so, have I tried Jesus' way? If not, am I a Christian?

O God, we have known and believed the love that Thou hast for us; may we by dwelling in love dwell in Thee, and Thou in us. May we learn to love Thee Whom we have not seen by loving our brethren whom we have seen. Teach us, O Heavenly Father, the love wherewith Thou hast loved us. Shed abroad, O Holy Spirit of love, the love of God and man in our hearts; for Thy name's sake. AMEN.

EIGHTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 18:15–17.

A common criticism of the Gospel is that it is only for individuals, not for the great common life. It is interesting and thought-provoking to find that the way Jesus specifies for dealing with wrong personal relations is based on the very principles found effective in the larger dealings of nations.

The way set forth in the Covenant of the League of Nations, for dealing with misunderstandings between nations,

is quite like the way of Jesus. First comes *Diplomacy,* direct dealing between the two nations involved. Then comes *Arbitration or Conciliation,* taking two or three others to help. Then, if that fails, let it be "told to the Assembly." And if a nation will not heed the combined judgment of the world, then let *Non-intercourse* be practiced.

Just because Jesus went down and back to fundamental and basic principles much of His teaching of the way of life fits the collective affairs of humanity no less than the private concerns of the individual.

O Thou Who art the Prince of Peace, guide more and more, we pray, the counsels and acts of the nations; that they may learn to live together in justice, peace, and good will. May the mind of Christ come to rule in the common life of mankind; so that every nation and people may seek not their own profit only, but the good of all. So may Thy Kingdom come, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

EIGHTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 18:21–35.

Underlying all that our Lord teaches about right relations is His demand for a spirit and practice of forgiveness that knows no limit. "Lord, how often shall I forgive? Until seven times [the perfect number]?" "No, but until seventy times seven"; that is until you lose count. Forgiveness is essential. To harbour grudges blackens one's soul. Jesus would have us absolutely clean from all bitterness, resentment, and malice. And He makes the way clear, as we have seen.

It is a shame for anyone who calls himself a Christian to cherish resentment, to harbour a grudge, to nourish a misunderstanding, until from a cloud no bigger than a man's hand it has grown to darken the whole sky.

Jesus not only taught this way; He lived it. Watch how He deals with men, up to that generous prayer, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." What a world this would be if men and women lived together in that spirit!

What am I doing to bring such a world? Why not be one of the companions of Jesus, to follow the path of frank, generous, unlimited, brotherly love?

O Lord, Who hast taught us to keep all Thy heavenly commandments by loving Thee and our neighbour; Grant us the spirit of peace and grace, that Thy universal family may be devoted to Thee with their whole heart, and united to each other with a perfect charity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

EIGHTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." MATTHEW 5:27, 28.

Jesus was no easy-going optimist. In the true sense he was not at all an *optimist;* He was a *meliorist.* He did not see this as the best of all possible worlds; He saw it as it was, and believed with all His soul that it might be made better. He was awake to all the sordidness and shame of human living. No one ever saw more clearly, or exposed more searchingly, the evil that lurks in the soul, and works devastatingly in the life.

How shall we deal with evil? In these straight and simple words Jesus stresses the primary need of meeting evil and dealing with it deep down in our own souls. Until the heart is sound, the life is not safe. The secret springs must be cleansed, or life cannot flow purely.

Do I want to be right, down in the depths of my heart? That is the crucial question. No cleansing, no salvation, is of real or lasting value, that stops short of the hidden places.

Almighty God, Who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

NINTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." MATTHEW 5:28.

We are coming to see in these days the wisdom and necessity of straight dealing with the instinct and impulses of sex. It is all to the good that we are abandoning the foolish and harmful policy of hiding it away, and are beginning to look at it squarely.

Jesus surprisingly anticipates the teaching and viewpoint of the best of modern psychologists in these words on which we meditate today. He tells us to leave no hidden corners as lurking places for lust. He leads us in to the deep places of the soul, and tells us that unless we master our sensual desires there, we are not right in the sight of God.

We tend to think of the body as the source of unclean and

carnal conduct. The truth is rather that the body is the helpless instrument of the soul within.

"Said the body to the soul,
'You are master: you control.'"

Jesus exhorts us to play fair with the good body God has given us, not compelling it to serve the shameful ends of a lustful spirit.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. For Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom. AMEN.

NINTH WEEK, MONDAY

"And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if they right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." MATTHEW 5:29, 30.

Was Jesus an ascetic? Not in the least. We find in Him a healthy love of wholesome life. He "came eating and drinking."

All the more emphatic and impressive then is His strong insistence on the necessity of stern self-discipline, if it be needed to keep the soul's supremacy secure.

He counsels self-denial, but not for its own sake. He declares that even self-mutilation may be "profitable"; but never as an end in itself, always as a means to higher and finer living.

Do not we of this present age need to heed this counsel? Are we ready to deny ourselves, to discipline ourselves, for the sake of a higher gain? Is not our insistence on the right of self-expression sometimes a subterfuge for letting loose our lower nature?

"If my body come from brutes, though somewhat finer than their own,
I am king, and this my kingdom; shall the royal voice be mute?
Nay: but if the rebel subjects seek to drag thee from the throne,
Hold they sceptre, human soul, and sway they province of the brute."

NINTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:31, 32.

It is commonly assumed that our Lord was here legislating on the subject of divorce and remarriage, a vital and troublesome subject in present-day life. Many Christian leaders declare that the whole matter is settled by these solemn words.

But if there is one principle clear beyond doubt as to the teachings of the Master, it is that He did not legislate. Always He appeals to conscience and judgment rather than to blind obedience. Always He holds up an ideal, instead of laying down a law. Least of all would we find Him legislating for the state.

This is an ideal for Christians, for all who follow Him. Is it weaker for being that? God forbid. It is all the more solemn and commanding. Unless your wife or your husband has broken the sacred bond that sets the two of you apart

from the rest of the world as "one flesh," you have no right to put away your mate. Marriage, according to Jesus, is a high and holy relationship, which must not lightly be broken.

Have mercy, O Lord, upon all those whom Thou hast associated with us in the bonds of friendship and kindredship; and grant that they, with us, may be so perfectly conformed to Thy holy will, that, being cleansed from all sin, we may be found worthy, by the inspiration of Thy love, to be partakers together of the blessedness of the life that is life indeed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

NINTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:31, 32.

In current discussions of marriage and divorce, the emphasis is on the rights of the individual. It is worthy of note that Jesus, in these words, would have the man think of his wife rather than of himself. "To "put away" one's wife "maketh her an adulteress." It puts her in a false position, brings shame upon her. Let a man think of that carefully, before taking steps to dissolve the marriage bond. If every one contemplating divorce should set first the question, *What will this mean to the other person?,* and keep the interests of that other person primary in importance, there might be fewer divorces and more happy homes.

Let each ask himself or herself, Am I caring more about the good of my partner in the home, than about my own pleasure or comfort or rights? If not, am I really following Jesus?

Sanctify, O Lord, our souls and bodies and spirits, search our consciences, and cast out of us every evil thought, every

base desire, all envy and pride, all wrath and anger, more especially the remembrance of injuries, and all that is contrary to Thy holy will. And grant us, O Lord, Lover of men, with a pure heart and contrite soul, to call upon Thee, our holy God and Father Who art in heaven. AMEN.

NINTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 19:13, 14.

Is it unwarranted to bring in here Jesus' estimate of the importance of children? It must seem clear to anyone who has "the mind of Christ" that one of the first considerations in facing the question of maintaining or breaking up a home must be the effect upon the children in that home. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." It is to the children that Christ looks for the coming of that Kingdom.

To think only, or chiefly, of one's own "freedom," or "rights," or "need of self-realization," while one ignores or minimizes the need of children for an unbroken home, for the united care of father and mother, is to lack the mind of Christ.

The head of one of our largest schools recently said that in that school over eighty per cent of the boys who make trouble or fail to "make good" come out of broken homes!

We may be sure that such facts would bulk large in Jesus' view of the divorce problem.

O Heavenly Father, shed forth Thy blessed Spirit richly on all the members of our household. Make each one of us an instrument in Thy hands for good. Purify our hearts, strengthen our minds and bodies, fill us with mutual love. Let no pride, no self-conceit, no rivalry, no dispute, ever

spring up among us. Make us earnest and true, wise and prudent, giving no just cause for offense; and may Thy holy peace rest upon us this day and every day, sweetening our trials, cheering us in our work, and keeping us faithful to the end; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

NINTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:33–36.

We need here to repeat to ourselves the caution to take Jesus and His teachings seriously, but not literally.

He tells us not to swear at all. Some conscientious Christians therefore refuse to take an oath in support of their statements, even in the solemn proceedings of a court of justice; and in most enlightened communities their scruples are regarded, permission being given them to affirm in solemn fashion.

But what our Lord here says has to do with far more than such oaths, if indeed it be concerned with them at all. Jesus is here concerned with the whole matter of our words. He cautions us against a coarse, extravagant, careless use of language.

Our age needs such a warning. Any observant person must note a growing use of loose, coarse, and profane language, on the stage, in the press, in ordinary social intercourse. We need to learn from our Lord the beauty of pure, simple, sincere speech, free from all coarseness and looseness.

Set, I pray Thee, a guard at the door of my lips, O Lord, this day and every day. Keep me from speech that would coarsen or profane or sully the souls of any that hearken

to my words. May I so speak that men may instinctively feel that I am a friend of Jesus Christ. In His name I pray. AMEN.

NINTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:33–36.

It is well worth noting on what Jesus bases his condemnation of loose, profane, and coarse speech. He sets it squarely on the fact of the *sacredness of all things.*

The Jew of that day would not use lightly the name of Jehovah. There stood the third commandment, declaring that one who so used lightly the name of the Lord would not be held guiltless. Therefore the Jew would swear by "heaven" or "earth," or his own head. Jesus scorns all that as a subterfuge. He declares, "Heaven belongs to God; earth belongs to God; your head belongs to God." Everything is holy, too holy to be used flippantly, or made the subject of coarse and extravagant talk. Be careful! Do not think or talk lightly of *anything;* for all is sacred.

Our Lord thus stands as an encourager of good taste and of reverence. He sets Himself and His followers against all that is coarse, vulgar, careless, flippant, in speech. We need the warning. A Christian should be known by the dignity and beauty and simple goodness of the words he uses.

Bestow on me, O Lord, a genial spirit and unwearied forbearance; a mild, loving, patient heart; kindly looks, pleasant, cordial speech and manners in the intercourse of daily life; that I may give offense to none, but as far as in me lies live in charity with all men. AMEN.

TENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." MATTHEW 12:37.

The importance that Jesus gave to words is clearly revealed here. He makes them the ground of our good or bad standing in the sight of God.

Is not that a fair estimate and judgment? It is "out of the abundance of the heart" that one speaks; and one can therefore be judged justly by his speech.

Jesus was in harmony with the very spirit of the religion He founded, in this estimate of the importance of words. The Bible opens with a supreme illustration of the power of "the word"; the creation began with a word of God. And all through the Bible the word is one of the supreme powers and interests of God. One of the chief names given to the Son of God, who makes Him known, is "The Word of God."

Perhaps we care too little about our speech. Let me never forget the warning, "By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned."

O Lord God, King of Heaven and earth, may it please Thee this day to order and hallow, to rule and govern, our hearts and our bodies, our thoughts, our works, and our words, that we may here and forever walk and speak in the light of Thy approval. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TENTH WEEK, MONDAY

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of "judgment." MATTHEW 12:36.

Does Jesus here condemn all lightness, all fun, all use of words to arouse laughter, and serve as a vehicle for humour? Some have so taken His strong warnings against "idle" words. In the days when Puritan standards obtained, all jesting was looked on askance; life should be viewed as a very solemn affair.

So far as we can judge, Jesus had none of that temper. He condemns "idle" words; but that means *useless* words —words that serve no good end. Few words are more useful, less "idle," than those through which kindly humour gleams, which add grace and charm, picturesqueness and vivid interest, to life, and lift the burden of care.

Jesus did not come to cultivate a set of solemn, portentous, chilling souls. He would be at home where kindly wit and humour flow, and life is brighter, happier, more carefree, for their play.

O God, Who through the grace of Thy Holy Spirit dost pour the gift of love into the hearts of Thy faithful people, grant unto us health, both of mind and body, that we may love Thee with our whole strength, and with entire satisfaction may perform those things which are pleasing unto Thee, through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." MATTHEW 5:37.

It may be that one of the deepest reasons for this strong counsel is the desire of Jesus that His followers, and all men, shall be utterly truthful and reliable. He wants to produce in every Christian a man "whose word is as good as his bond"; who does not have to insist on the truthfulness of what he says. It is enough that he says it. When he says "Yes" or "No," that settles it. More than that weakens, rather than strengthens, the statement.

Certainly, in the light of this passage, we cannot be careless or slovenly in our use of the wonderful gift of speech. To speak well, with clear utterance, with choice diction, with helpful and quickening grace, is a privilege every Christian should covet.

Mr. Dwight L. Moody once called on a student to read the fifth chapter of Matthew. As the student was passing carelessly over the second verse, Mr. Moody said, "Wait a moment. Did you notice that it says: 'He opened His mouth'? Open your mouth when you speak!"

Even in little things, Christ is our example—if anything can be counted a little thing that counts for human good and joy.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, let our hearts be graciously enlightened by Thy holy radiance, that we may serve Thee without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life; that so we may escape the darkness of this world, and by Thy guidance attain the land of eternal brightness; through Thy mercy, O blessed Lord, Who dost live and govern all things, world without end. AMEN.

TENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:38–42.

This is one of the storm centres of modern religion. Tolstoi has made it such through making "non-resistance" the central principle of the religion of Jesus.

It is easy to denounce Tolstoi, and the extreme pacifists who share his view that Jesus here condemns all use of force. Harnack defines a fanatic as one who "sees but a single red-hot spot"; and to the mind of the great Russian prophet this text, "that ye resist not evil," gleamed with an intensity that blinded his mind to the significance of greater sayings.

Yet let us be careful how we condemn extreme insistence on this saying. At least Tolstoi forced men to consider Jesus, to face the implications of their religion. Perhaps he did go too far; but is that our danger? Is not the danger for most of us over at the other extreme? We take Jesus too lightly. Let us beware how we condemn anyone who takes Him too seriously.

This at least is true: that the extreme pacifist, who will use or sanction no force, is nearer to the mind of Christ than the extreme militarist, who trusts in force as ultimate arbiter.

O make Thy way plain before my face. Support me this day under all the difficulties I shall meet with. I offer myself to Thee, O God, this day, to do in me and with me, as to Thee seems most meet. AMEN.

TENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." MATTHEW 5:39.

Is Jesus here counselling a lamblike or cowardly attitude, that will let one lie down and take what any bully sees fit to give? His teaching has been so interpreted.

But we miss the very point of this counsel, if we forget that, to the mind of Jesus, the chief matter always was the living of one's life and the doing of one's work. And it may well be that this word about "turning the other cheek" has a deeper and nobler meaning than lies on the surface.

A good illustration comes from a football game. A member of a team once told me how the coach warned the players: "Play the game! Don't care if one of your opponents hits you! Let him hit you again! You go on, and play the game."

So Jesus calls to us, "Play the game. Someone hits you, hurts you! What of it! Let him hit you, or hurt you, again. You have no time or strength to waste on private animosities or personal revenge. Go on and play the game, counting personal hurts part of the price you gladly pay for the fun and glory of the game."

Almighty and everlasting God, grant that our wills be ever meekly subject to Thy will, and our hearts be ever honestly ready to serve Thee. AMEN.

TENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." MATTHEW 5:41.

Those who take this passage as a command to take no part in military measures, to refuse participation in all exercise of force on the part of the state, must deal with the plain meaning of this particular saying. For it has to do with compulsory service of the state.

A man is standing at his door, or working on his farm. A military expedition passes, and the man is conscripted to carry part of the equipment for a mile. Jesus says, In such a case, do it with good cheer; go two miles; add to the required service a voluntary attitude and action that saves the soul in you.

It is good advice for the many experiences where force of circumstances, or force of some sort, lays hold on us and compels us to do what we do not want to do. In such cases, says our Lord, meet the unpleasant necessity with a willing spirit that takes the sting out of the experience. Go into it with good cheer. Do even more than is required. So shall you be saved from the inward bitterness which compulsion so easily induces. If you have to do what you would not choose to do, choose to do it.

O God, forasmuch as our strength is in Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." MATTHEW 5:42.

What an impossible command to set before a modern Christian! Am I to give to every beggar, blindly, unquestioningly? I shall only exhaust very quickly my means and my power to help, and become dependent myself.

We must recall again that basic idea, that Jesus is to be taken, not literally, but seriously.

Give to everyone who appeals to me? Yes. But not necessarily what he asks; not necessarily things. Jesus did not give always what men asked. He was no soft-hearted Santa Claus. He gave what His best judgment felt that the particular individual needed; and He is our example.

A callous indifference to human need is utterly incompatible with the spirit of Jesus. But so is a careless readiness to fling about what we have, regardless of men's real needs. Someone has said of the verse, "Blessed is the man that considereth the poor," that that is just what few of us will do. Jesus would have us *consider,* give time and patient thought, so that we can show extreme generosity without endangering the character of the one we try to help.

O Thou Eternal, evermore fill us with that pity for others' troubles which comes from forgetfulness of our own; and the glad hope of the children of eternity. And unto Thee, the Beginning and the End, Lord of the living, Refuge of the dying, be thanks and praise for ever! AMEN.

ELEVENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:38–42.

This at least is clear—that our Lord here outlaws personal revenge on the part of His followers. How far His teachings here can and should be carried out by the state may be open to debate. But there is no necessity for doubt as to the meaning of this teaching in personal and private relations. In that realm is no room for revenge, or retaliation. The "law of Christ" is "Do as you'd be done by," not "Do as you've been done by." That someone has wronged me is no reason or excuse for my wronging him.

There are mighty meanings here for our large, coöperative living; for nations, and groups, and social entities. Society will never be right until it gets rid of retaliation and vengeance as working motives.

But, while the way to that great end may be far from clear, there is no obscurity as to the application of this teaching to my life and my personal and private relations.

O God, grant that the example of our Lord, Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, but prayed for His enemies with unconquerable loving-kindness, may be to me not only a beautiful ideal, but an inspiration for my daily living; that the same mind and spirit may be in me which was also in Christ Jesus. AMEN.

ELEVENTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:43, 44.

It was God Who said, "Thou shalt love Thy neighbor." But it was not God Who added, "and hate thine enemy." Men added that. It is an instance of a natural—perhaps we should rather say, unnatural, but common—tendency to reduce hard commands to a minimum.

"If God tells me to love my neighbour, then I am free to hate anyone who isn't my neighbour."

But Jesus' voice is one with the better and deeper and nobler voice of the human heart, when it says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Is that my practice? Or do I only say it over to myself as a lovely statement of what ought to be my spirit? How about my attitude and conduct towards those I do not like, the people who "make me tired," the people who have injured me? A man once told me that one of the happiest moments of his life was when, after a sharp struggle in his soul, he was kind and generous to one who had injured him gravely. Why not try it, and see if Jesus was not right—that it does pay to be kind to the unthankful and the evil?

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting. Above all cast out from my soul all leaven of malice and uncharitableness, that I may be enabled to love others as Thou hast loved me; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

ELEVENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." MATTHEW 5:44.

"Love your enemies." Does that apply in war time?

Of course it does. It would be wildly absurd for Jesus to give a definite command, "Love your enemies," allowing such a modification of it as this, "except when you have enemies."

If a Christian is so unfortunate as to live in a country that is at war with another, all the more for that fact must he love those against whom his country is fighting. That does not involve approving their acts, or hoping they will win, or failing in loyalty to his own land if in his conscience he feels that his country is right.

But it does involve readiness to think and believe the best not the worst about those enemies; care not to be unjust to them, or misled by baseless propaganda; constant prayer that they (and we) may see and choose and do the right.

"But men cannot fight if they really thus love their enemies."

Very well; if that is so, then Christians cannot fight. No Christian can have anything to do with war, if war forbids him to love the enemy.

O Thou in Whose hand are the hearts of Thy creatures, shed abroad Thy peace in the world. By the might of Thy Holy Spirit quench the pride and anger and greed which cause man to strive against man, and people against people. Lead all nations in the ways of mutual help and good will, and hasten the time when the earth shall confess Thee as

Lord, and no evil deeds of man shall defile Thy glorious creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

ELEVENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." MATTHEW 5:45.

Here our Lord begins to reveal the beautiful hidden motives that should lead us to follow His counsels about dealing with evil.

We are thus to be kind, forgiving, abjuring revenge, loving to the limit, because it is our business to be like God; and that is the spirit of God.

What a motive that sets going in our souls! Every one of us, the humblest and least of us, is here to be like God, to be one of His children. And God is free and generous. His sun shines on all; His rain falls on all alike.

Thoughtful men, good men, have often viewed the impartiality of nature as evidence of the impersonality of the Reality that lies back of it. "Whatever God or gods there be care nothing about us," they have said. Jesus views the same impartiality as evidence of the great and generous goodness of God; and finds in it a noble example and challenge for us. Is God so unsparing in His kindness? Let us be like Him. What higher aim can we have?

Fill us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, with an unquenchable longing after likeness to Thee, that shall lead us at last to the joy of Thy continual companionship, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

ELEVENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 5:45, 46.

Someone says that this verse sets forth "the terrible impartiality of God." But to Jesus it was not terrible; it was beautiful.

Some think it a proof that there is no Father in heaven, that rain or clear weather does not always come in answer to the prayers of good people. Jesus had the truer view—that the impartial way in which sunshine and rain come is proof of the goodness of God. He cannot limit His kindness to those who are good and thankful; nor should we.

When next we are tempted to doubt the loving-kindness of our Father because He does not show unmistakably special favours to His own, let us think of this word of Jesus, and give thanks that God's kindness "goes far out beyond our dreams."

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

ELEVENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again." LUKE 10:5, 6.

But is there no limit to our kindness? Is it not "wasted effort" to be good and patient and loving to those who reject our approaches?

How often, when we have tried to be kind and helpful,

only to be repulsed, we have said in our hearts, if not in open words, "Well, I am sorry I did that; I might as well have saved my labour or my breath."

It was because He knew what was in man, that Jesus told His followers, when He sent them out on their evangelistic tour, not to fear that their kind words and thought might be wasted. "When you enter a house," said He, "speak a kindly word of greeting. If the people there are worthy, and will receive your good greeting, well. But if not, your kindness will not be wasted. It will 'return to you.'" *You* will be better off for having said the friendly word, shown the kindly spirit.

Do not fear to be friendly, kind, generous. No such word or act is wasted. You are the richer for it in any event.

We call to mind, O God, before Thy throne of grace, all those whom Thou hast given to be near and dear to us, and all for whom we are especially bound to pray, beseeching Thee to remember them all for good, and to fulfil, as may be expedient for them, all their desires and wants. We commend to Thee any who may have wronged us, whether by word or deed, beseeching Thee to forgive them and us all our sins, and to bring us all into Thy heavenly kingdom of loving brotherhood; through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

ELEVENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? MATTHEW 5:46, 47.

Why should I "do more than others"? Instinctively we raise the objection. But the answer is plain: Because you are a Christian.

Christ expects, and has a right to expect, that His follower shall live by a higher standard than that by which the rest of the world lives. It may not be higher than the standard by which all the world *ought* to live. But a Christian is one called out to live a better life than others, to take a higher path, to follow a nobler ideal, in order that all men may come to see the beauty of the higher life.

It is so natural to say, "I am no worse than others: I only do as others do"; and to feel excused by that plea. Such a plea will not stand before the judgment seat of Christ, or before a truly Christian conscience. We know we ought to "do more than others," because we are Christians!

Lord, help me never to be content with any low standard of attainment, but constantly to compare myself, not with others about me, but with Thy perfect ideal in Jesus Christ our Lord; that so there may ever be in me that deep shame and true penitence out of which may grow increase of holiness, through the grace of Thy good Spirit. AMEN.

TWELFTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." MATTHEW 5:48.

What an impossible command! It is as if Jesus set us down at the base of the highest and most inaccessible of mountains, and said, "Go on, climb to the top!"

Perhaps He, spiritual leader of the race, might scale the summit. But how can He expect us to do it?

Let us see what this great command means in practical terms. It means three things very clearly:

1. Never rest content with anything short of the highest conceivable ideal.

2. Never excuse yourself for any lapse from that highest ideal.

3. Never abandon the road to the highest.

Take the first of those three meanings. How readily we content ourselves with a slipshod and second-rate ideal! We say to our aspiring souls, "Thus far and no farther." We are "afraid of that which is high."

Christ calls us to "set our affections on the best."

Speaking of Abraham's sacrifice of his son, Dr. Rainsford said, "He gave the best he had to the best he knew." That is one meaning of this command, "Be ye perfect." Never be content with anything short of the highest ideal.

O God, Who hast commanded us to be perfect, as Thou our Father in heaven art perfect, put into our hearts, we pray Thee, a continual desire to obey Thy holy will. Teach us day by day what Thou wouldst have us do, and give us grace and power to fulfil the same. May we never, from love of ease, decline the path which Thou pointest out, nor, for fear of shame, turn away from it; for the sake of Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN.

TWELFTH WEEK, MONDAY

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." MATTHEW 5:48.

A second practical meaning of this terribly high command is, "Never excuse yourself for any lapse from the highest."

Human nature has a queer capacity for idolizing some high and fine ideal, paying it reverence; and yet saying, in its heart, "I really can't live up to that." So we excuse ourselves, when we fail to do our best, or to be loyal to the

highest. We say, "It is too much to expect that I shall keep so high a standard."

It is *not* too much to expect. It may be too much to expect, when you think of yourself, your stumblings, your shortcomings, your limitations. But it is not too much to expect, when you think who calls you to pursue that ideal.

> " 'Tis God's all-animating voice
> That calls thee from on high;
> 'Tis His own hand presents the prize
> To thine aspiring eye."

Never excuse your own failure to be and do the best you know! Never whisper to yourself that of course you can't be perfect! Christ has told you to be perfect as God is perfect. You can be; you should be; there is no good excuse for you if you are not.

So fill us with Thy spirit, O Lord, that we, passing from one thing to another, may go from strength to strength, everywhere full of Thy praise, everywhere full of Thy work, finding the joy of the Lord to be our strength, until we come into Thine everlasting Kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWELFTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." MATTHEW 5:48.

One more practical meaning is in this great command: *Never stop climbing.* Never give up the struggle, no matter how often you fall, or how painfully. This great-hearted call means that you must "go on forever, and fail, and go on again," "never despairing," as Jesus once said.

It is a shame to have failed, of course. It is a sin to fall short. And we sin every day. This word, "Be ye perfect," sets before us a glowing ideal that should make us go on our knees in penitence, confession, and prayer for renewal; and then get up and go on again.

One of the noblest of epitaphs is that of the men who dared attempt to climb Mount Everest, and died in the attempt: "When last seen they were going strong for the summit." That is the spirit Christ asks the Christian to show in the spiritual life.

Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes in this life, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found. AMEN.

TWELFTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." JOHN 5:17.

New light comes from this word of our Lord, upon His great summons, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

The call daunts us, because we so easily picture God as ever resting in a calm perfection that is absolute. The thought of sharing His perfection seems too much like a dream of Nirvana.

But Jesus thought of His Father not as eternally resting, but as eternally working. "My Father worketh even until now." The story clearly shows that Jesus thought of God as ceaselessly working even on the Sabbath, and therefore

Jesus felt justified in doing good on the Sabbath. His picture of God is the picture of an Eternal Worker.

Some theologians of our day are telling us that God's perfection is not that of absolute unbroken rest and calm; but rather the glory of unceasing progress towards an ever-expanding goal. So Jesus thought of His Father and our Father. And when He said "Be perfect as God is," He set before us as our ideal that of endless progress to an ever-higher realization of life. To heed that call is to "enter into life," and to share in the perfect life of God.

Almighty God, Who fillest all things with Thy presence, we pray Thee, of Thy great love, to keep us near unto Thee this day; grant that in all our work we may be conscious that Thou art working with us and in us; and in that consciousness may find rest and joy and contentment; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWELFTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." MATTHEW 6:1.

Jesus is here counselling something more and richer than mere concealment of our good deeds. He is calling us to realize the *inwardness* of true living.

Which do you really have in mind, as the guide to your conduct, the judgments of men, or the verdict of God? That is what makes the great and eternal difference. One may do very good deeds, and win much deserved praise, whose chief aim is to get recognition and applause from men. But such a spirit never gets the highest and deepest returns from life and effort. Sooner or later one who has no

higher guiding principle than that comes upon some temptation that is too strong for him, and yields, *because no one will ever know*. One is safe only as his deepest desire is to be right in the presence and judgment of the Unseen and Eternal.

Years ago, I heard a man who had stood for right and ideal courses against heavy odds and bitter antagonisms, say, in answer to the question of a friend as to the secret of his power, "I really do care more for the judgment of God and of my own conscience than for anything else." That is the sort of man one can "give his hand to in the dark."

O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy: that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we miss not the things eternal. This we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWELFTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:2, 5.

"They have their reward."

What a wonderful outcome of one's striving and living! To get the reward one has sought! What could be finer?

But wait—suppose you have sought mean and low things? Then what an awful outcome to "have one's reward."

Such is the fate of the men Jesus pictures here. What was it they wanted, when they gave money ostentatiously, or prayed showily in public places? They wanted to be

"seen of men." Well, they were seen of men. Did it pay? How terribly cheap it seemed, that reward, when it came.

Sit down with yourself and ask, what am I really seeking? Do I want little, mean things, praise, money, applause? If I want those things enough, I can have them. But what of it?

Give me, O God, a longing for the greater rewards, that ever elude the grasp, that lead on and on. Keep me from the fate of standing with all I have sought within my grasp and nothing further to live for or work for. What fate is sadder than for men to "have their reward"?

"If He could doubt on His triumphant cross,
How much more I, in all the shame and loss
Of seeing all my low desires fulfilled,
Of winning all that I have hoped or willed,
Of being all that I desired to be?
My God, my God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

TWELFTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:2–4.

Does this forbid open giving, even when that will prompt others, and so stimulate more gifts? No one will say that who has caught the real spirit of Jesus. His thought here as everywhere is of the motive. Sometimes men and women give secretly because only so can they give stingily without being put to shame before men. Let none such claim indorsement from Jesus! He is calling us to "give to that which is out of sight."

Notice, too, which hand He says should not know about the other. "Let not your *left* hand know what the *right*

hand is doing." The right hand is the hand of generosity, thrust out in welcome, holding out the gift. The left hand is the hand that holds back, keeps to itself, is held in the pocket. So far from being a command not to give, this is rather a call to give without withholding, without too much caution.

But above all it tells us to give as in the sight of God, in a way to please Him, whatever men may think or fail to think of our giving. Such gifts are the rich and fruitful ones.

Almighty God, the Giver of all good, Who givest to all men liberally and upbraideth not, set us free from all selfishness, all withholding of that wherewith we might bless the lives of others; and by Thy indwelling Spirit fill us with the joy of generosity, that we may be true comrades of Thy Son our Lord, and may enter into His joy. AMEN.

THIRTEENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:2–4.

It is easy to think that Jesus has in mind here exclusively, or mainly, the rich; that He is cautioning them against display and pride in their giving. That is only half of the meaning. He had in mind just as truly the poor, who may, from a sense of shame, fail to give the little they might give. It is not unlikely that more has been lost to good causes and to the Kingdom of God through the reluctance of small givers to do their small bit than by the miserliness or niggardliness of the wealthy. It is so much easier to stay out and do nothing than to give a very little; it "saves one's pride."

But "saving one's pride" is poor business for a Christian. If you are to live with God, you will have no use for pride. Do your part, give your mite, simply, honestly, as in the sight of God and not of men. That is the rule for every Christian, rich or poor.

Set me free, O God, from all pride and false shame. If I have much to give, let me give it without stint, and without self-praise. If I have little to give, may I give that little without shame or reluctance; looking ever to Thee and not to those around me for approval; and knowing that Thou lookest not on the outward appearance, but upon the heart. AMEN.

THIRTEENTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:1–6.

What value is there in religion? Many are asking that question just now.

The answer depends on *what you are after,* in seeking God.

Do you, most of all, want help in getting or doing what *you* want?

Or do you, above all, want help in being what *God* wants?

In the light of these simple but profound and solemn words of the Lord Jesus, ask yourself that decisive question, and answer it honestly. Religion may be worth little as a means of getting things one wants; it is the one sure means of coming to be what God would have us be.

Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid, cleanse

the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy Name, through Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTEENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
LUKE 18:9–14.

How can I be most sure to get the good from prayer, and worship, and church going?

Jesus here shows us two men who went to church to worship. One of them, He says, "went to his house justified rather than the other." How did they go?

One went to show God how good he was, to parade his virtues.

The other went humbly conscious of his needs, and desiring to have them met and ministered to by the grace of God.

What is the spirit in which I pray, and go to church, and worship? That is what will make the difference in the outcome.

Most holy and merciful Father, we acknowledge and confess in Thy presence our sinful nature, prone to evil and slothful in good, and all our shortcomings and offenses against Thee. Thou alone knowest how often we have sinned, in wandering from Thy ways, in wasting Thy gifts, in forgetting Thy love. But Thou, O Lord, have pity upon us, who are ashamed and sorry for all wherein we have displeased Thee. Teach us to hate our errors; cleanse us from our secret faults; and forgive our sins, for the sake of Thy dear Son our Saviour. And, O most holy and loving Father, send Thy purifying grace into our

hearts, we beseech Thee; that we may henceforth live in Thy light and walk in Thy ways, according to the commandments of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTEENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
LUKE 10:38–42.

This is a story that has been much misunderstood. Our Lord is not here setting the contemplative spirit above the active, prayer above service, meditation above helpfulness.

He is calling each of us to respect the other, and allow place to the other. His world and His Church are for all types, not for one only; and no one type must insist that the other conform.

If we imagine the positions reversed, and Mary going to the Lord to ask that He call Martha to leave her serving and come to pray and listen and meditate at His feet, can we not hear Him say, in gentle rebuke, "Mary, Mary, thou art careful about prayer. But Martha too has chosen a good part, and she shall not be taken from it."

Christ has place for our infinite varieties of temperament and service; and His Church must have, or it is not in harmony with Him.

Praise be to Thee, O God, that Thou hast room for me in Thy kingdom and household. But help me also to give thanks that Thou hast room for many who are different from me, who see truth from other angles, think different thoughts, serve in other ways, and seem to lack much that is dear to me. Help me to rejoice in Thy greatness, and in the wide variety of Thy service; and humbly to recognize in all who are trying to serve Thee Thy true children and

followers, though they walk in other ways than those which I find natural; through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

THIRTEENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
LUKE 10:38–42.

What was the real ground of Jesus' gentle rebuke? What was Martha's real fault?

Not that she was interested and busy about serving and cooking and ministering to homely needs. But that she was *"anxious and troubled* about *much* serving."

Such fussiness was wholly inappropriate for such a visitor. Had Martha's thoughts been on the One Who was coming to her home, she would have realized how little He cared for elaborate food, and for what we may call "fuss," and how much He wanted quiet, simplicity, opportunity to talk together about God and life.

Our Lord warns us here against the temptation to let outward details crowd the great, inner, simple realities of life out of our interests. Who of us in this busy age does not need the warning? Who of us will not ask, "Lord, is it I?"

O God, from Whom cometh every good and perfect gift, give unto me, I beseech Thee, a quiet heart, a simple mind, a love of the inward goods of life; that, living amid the great things of the soul, I may find Thee more and more, and live with Thee more and more, each day. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTEENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:5, 6.

How shall I pray? There is no more important question for one who would live a truly and deeply religious life. To be religious without praying is like living without breathing. It is impossible. "Prayer is a way of living with God."

On nothing do we need the guidance of Jesus more than on "how to pray." And on no subject is His guidance more clear and sure.

These verses form one of the two introductory statements prefaced to the Lord's Prayer. What do they teach?

This—*When you pray, think only of God.* Make His presence very real. Shut out the rest of the world; withdraw to the place where you can be alone with God.

This does not involve a condemnation of public worship. One may be with a throng in a church, and still "enter into the secret place and shut the door and pray to the Father in secret." One must do that, if he is really to pray.

The first condition of true prayer is a deep and vivid sense of God. Let my thoughts be on Him, whatever else must be shut out.

When you pray, think of God. How simple a direction that is! Yet how it would change some of our praying, if we put it into practice.

Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy holy name; through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTEENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
JOHN 4:23, 24.

Here again is emphasized the thought that in true prayer one thinks only of God. If one is to worship at all in any true sense, he must worship in "spirit and reality."

It is a strange and arresting idea, this of the Father "seeking" such worshippers. We think of prayer as a search after God. Perhaps, at its best, it is putting ourselves where God can find us. Jesus likens God to the shepherd seeking the sheep, the woman hunting for the lost coin.

Always God is "seeking" the right kind of worshippers. And wherever He finds one who worships "in spirit and in truth," with a deep desire for fellowship with the unseen, and with utter sincerity, there God finds what He seeks, and the worshipping soul finds the blessing of true, enriching fellowship with the Father.

Forms of worship may be useful. But spirit and reality are essential.

O God, by the indwelling of Thy most Holy Spirit, purge our eyes to discern and contemplate Thee until we attain to see as Thou seest, judge as Thou judgest, choose as Thou choosest, and, having sought and found Thee, to behold Thee and dwell with Thee for ever and ever. In the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FOURTEENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:7, 8.

The second introductory statement Jesus gives is that prayer must be simple, not elaborate. This does not mean

that prayer must always be brief. We are told once that our Lord "continued all night in prayer." Nor does His warning against "vain repetitions" rule out the repeated use of the same words. In Gethsemane Jesus prayed three times, "saying the same words."

What He here emphasizes as necessary is simplicity. Queen Victoria said of Mr. Gladstone that he addressed her "as if she were a public meeting." We slip into that kind of praying if we are not careful. Jesus guards against that in these verses.

Note His example in this, as in all that pertains to prayer. In the first three Gospels there are recorded seven prayers of Jesus. With the one exception of the Lord's Prayer, each of them is a single sentence; and the Lord's Prayer is a model of brief simplicity.

If we are to pray in Jesus' way, we must have done with all elaborateness, formality, impressiveness; and in the simplest and most direct fashion open our hearts to the Infinite Love of God.

O Thou that hearest prayer, help us so to pray that our souls may truly commune with Thee, and "spirit with spirit may meet." Deliver us from all artifice, all pretense, all that is unnatural or forced; that we may meet Thee in the secret places of the soul, and be refreshed by the friendly touch of the Spirit of our Father. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FOURTEENTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:9–13.

One of the strange but luminous facts about our Lord is that He gave so few directions or suggestions about the spe-

cific practice of religion or the organization of His church. How much we make of creeds, of orders, of church organization! Yet Jesus never ordained any of these matters, or left specific suggestions about them. Think of the fact that the church has an *"Apostles'"* Creed but a *"Lord's"* Prayer! There is no "Lord's Creed."

The fact that our Lord was so divinely careless about so much that we count important, or even essential, gives all the more weight to the few specific commands He did give as to religious order. He did leave two definite parts of outward religion—a prayer, and a sacrament.

Look at the contrast again: He left no creed, no organization, no church order, no rules of procedure; but He left a form of prayer. How that fact sets prayer high above everything else in importance!

Far more than by all its creeds and orders, the church has been held together and held faithful to its Lord through the ages by the two gifts of Jesus, the Lord's Prayer, and the Lord's Supper. If we made more of these, and kept the use of them as simple as they were in the mind of the Master, the church might be more united and more powerful than it is.

Grant, O God our Father, that we who call ourselves by the name of Thy dear Son, and profess to be His followers, may truly follow Him in our life with Thee. Help us to care but little for all that meant little to Him, and to seek supremely those ends to which He gave His life, and those ways in which His spirit was at home; that so we may ever grow in nearness to Thee and to all who love Thee; in the name of Jesus. AMEN.

FOURTEENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." LUKE 11:1.

This is Luke's account of the origin of the Lord's Prayer. The disciples asked the Master to teach them to pray. When did they ask it? Just after He had been praying. Can we doubt that the reason why they suddenly felt the desire to know how to pray was that they felt the beauty and value of His praying? When He had finished His prayer, they said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

That is how parents may best lead their children into the prayer life; how friend may lead friend; by living that life so beautifully that those who watch it will desire it for themselves.

And if, at any time, we grow cold or mechanical in our praying, let us get into touch with the praying of Jesus, watch how and when He prays, and we shall find ourselves, like those earlier disciples, saying to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." Here, supremely, He is the Master of us all.

Forgive us, O Lord, that so often our religion repels rather than attracts those who know us. Help us so to believe, so to pray, so to live, that all who come near to us shall desire so to believe, to pray, and to live. May the Christ Who dwells in our hearts shine through our words and works, that men may through us be drawn to God. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FOURTEENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"When ye pray, say, Father." LUKE 11:2.

In that simple sentence is a whole exposition of what prayer really is. It guards us against two mistakes into which we readily fall.

At the one extreme are those who think of prayer as a means of getting what we want by asking God for it. The proof of the power and value of prayer lies for them in marvellous results that come when one prays.

There is truth in this idea; but, carried to an extreme, it slips over into magic and mechanics. It deals with the power of God almost as an impersonal force, prayer being the switch that controls it.

At the other extreme are those who think of prayer as a means of bringing our lives into harmony with the will of God. They ask nothing; they acquiesce.

There is rich truth in this view. But, carried to an extreme, it slips into fatalism.

Jesus says, "When ye pray, say, Father." That saves from both errors. He who always says "Father," keeps the personal note, and the personal relation, which saves him from fevered fanaticism on the one hand, and from frigid fatalism on the other.

O God, from Whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed, give unto Thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that our hearts may be set to obey Thy commandments; and also that by Thee we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FOURTEENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"When ye pray, say, Father." LUKE 11:2.

Carry a little further this thought of the value of keeping the personal relation controlling when we pray. How poor and stunted a home would be if the intercourse between child and parent consisted wholly of asking for things! How cold and unsatisfying, if, on the other hand, the child simply did what the father wanted, with never a thought or a wish or a word between them! The filial, friendly note saves prayer and makes it right.

Sometime after Lincoln became President, an old friend from Illinois paid him a visit. After they had chatted awhile, Lincoln said, "Well, what can I do for you?" "Nothing, Mr. President," said the man. "I just came to tell you I love you and believe in you." Lincoln sprang to his feet, his face aglow, and exclaimed, "You're the first man who has come to see me who didn't want something of me."

May it not be that our Father is glad at times to have His children come and talk to Him, not because they want something, but because they love Him and believe in Him, and want to tell Him so?

"My God, I love Thee, not because
I hope for heaven thereby;
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Must die eternally;

Not with the hope of winning aught,
Or seeking a reward,
But freely, fully, as Thyself
Hast lovèd me, O Lord."

FOURTEENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"When ye pray, say, Father, hallowed be Thy name." LUKE 11:2.

If you were writing a prayer what would be its first petition? Not many of us would set first what Jesus does in His prayer.

Why does He pray first of all that the name of God may be hallowed? Not through any superstitious awe such as influenced the religious leaders of His time and place to keep from uttering the name of God. Why then?

Because He has just said, "When ye pray, say, Father." And because He knew well how easily we go to extremes and lose our balance. He would have us careful to preserve reverence, along with our intimacy with God. It is as if He said, "Call God by the simplest, most familiar, most homely and intimate name you can find. And then *hallow* that name."

"Familiarity breeds contempt." Familiarity with the highest ought to breed reverence. It will, if we live in the spirit of Jesus, and pray as He taught us, saying, "Father, hallowed be Thy name."

"Hallowed be Thy name! Hallelujah!
Infinite Ideality!
Immeasurable Reality!
Infinite Personality!
Hallowed be Thy name! Hallelujah!

We know we are nothing, for all is Thou and in Thee;
We feel we are something; that also has come from Thee.
We are nothing, O Thou! But Thou wilt help us to be.
Hallowed be Thy name! Hallelujah!"

FOURTEENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"Hallowed be Thy name." LUKE 11:2.

There is meaning here not only for prayer, but for life. We are living in an age that prides itself on being open-eyed and unafraid. We will have naught to do with perpetuating holy shams. We want everything uncovered and brought to light.

That is a right tendency; but, unless we are careful, it leads to flippancy, to lack of reverence, to a coarsening of our sense of values. It need not lead to such a result, and it should not; it will not if our hearts are right.

All the more in a free age must we guard the habit and attitude of reverence. We must learn how to deal intimately and familiarly with beautiful and fine and sacred things without losing our reverence for them.

Booth Tarkington tells of a man who accounted for an exceptionally happy married life by saying, "My wife and I have never ceased to treat each other as perfect strangers." To achieve intimacy without loss of reverence, is an art we sorely need today. We can preserve it in its beauty, if we pray, "Father, hallowed be Thy name," and then live as we pray.

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell."

Almighty God, the Giver of all good, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly, grant, we beseech Thee, that in all our undertakings Thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from us; but that in all things we may promote Thy glory, and hallow Thy name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTEENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father." MATTHEW 6:9.

"Our Father." As Walter Rauschenbusch reminds us, our Lord's Prayer is one that cannot be said selfishly. We always take others into our thoughts and prayers through that little word, "Our."

Some deeply religious folk are selfish in their religion: it is an affair between themselves and God. Such people love the Twenty-third Psalm—and misuse it. The psalm is not a prayer; it is a meditation. To model one's praying on it is to fall far below our Lord's ideal. I know a man who, for his own uses, printed that psalm with all the pronouns of the first person in red: "The Lord is *My* shepherd; *I* shall not want." Those pronouns stood out shockingly offensive.

Jesus tells us to pray, "Our Father." Thereby we take in all the world; only so can we pray aright in the sight and presence of God, the Father of all.

How wonderfully our Lord keeps the balance! He says, "Go into the secret place and shut the door." And then He tells us to pray, "Our Father." Not even in secret are we to think of ourselves alone.

O God, Who hast taught us to keep all Thy heavenly commandments by loving Thee and our neighbour, grant us the spirit of peace and grace, that we may be both devoted to Thee with all our heart, and united to each other with a pure will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTEENTH WEEK, MONDAY

"Our Father, Which art in heaven." "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." MATTHEW 6:9, 10.

Once more note the exquisite balance of Jesus' teaching.

All through religious history two ideals of religion have struggled for supremacy. The adherents of the one have scorned the other.

The first is the earthly type, the second is the otherworldly type.

One cares supremely for this life. How can this world be made right and happy and fair? How can social justice be established and maintained?

The other looks away to "a land that is very far off." It sings of Paradise, and longs to flee away and be at rest.

One thinks of earth, our life now; the other of heaven, "the sweet bye and bye."

Jesus joins them in a perfect harmony. God is "our" Father, Father of us here on earth. Yet He is "in heaven," Lord of the unseen, ideal world. We belong to Him here; we belong to that realm of ideals.

We are here to make earth like heaven. The dream of paradise is like the pattern Moses saw on the Mount—directions for building something here.

"How to live a heavenly life on earth" is, as Baxter said, our task.

O God, Who hast set us here amid earthly things, but hast also set eternity in our hearts, help us to live as good citizens of this our present home, without forfeiting our heritage of that better world that is to come. Make us faithful in every daily, homely duty, and loyal to the vision of eternal glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTEENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:9–13.

Glance through this prayer a moment. Two pronouns stand out: "Thy" and "Our."

We desire some things for God, and some for ourselves, if we pray rightly. What is it we desire for God? The great and splendid things: "Thy name," "Thy kingdom," "Thy will"; "Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory." There is here no request for any honor, or fame, or power, or kingdom, or glory, or fulfilled purpose, of our own. All that is for God.

What do we ask for ourselves? *Our* bread; *Our* forgiveness; *Our* freedom from temptation; *Our* deliverance from evil. That is all.

Do we pray like that? Are we content to ask for self only food, forgiveness, and moral salvation? Do we want God to have the kingdom, power, and glory?

How far beyond our praying is this prayer of Jesus!

Yet there is one more great reality that is "ours." *"Our* Father." Having Him, we can leave all to Him.

"Lord of all life, below, above,
Whose light is truth, whose warmth is love,
Before Thy ever-blazing throne
We ask no lustre of our own.
Grant us Thy truth to make us free,
And kindling hearts that burn for Thee,
Till all Thy living altars claim
One holy light, one heavenly flame."

FIFTEENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done." MATTHEW 6:10.

Here is a further instance of the wonderful balance in the thinking of Jesus.

What is religion? Some would say, It is something which must come from God, a grace, an endowment. We wait on Him, and He bestows it on us. That is religion.

No, say others; religion is something to be done for God. We learn what He wants of us, and we do it. That is religion.

Jesus puts both together. He tells us to pray that something may *come,* and that something may *be done.*

The "Kingdom" must come from God. It is a gift to the individual, and to the world. We look for His appearing, for His mighty working: then the Kingdom will come.

But all the time here is His will *to be done.*

His Kingdom will not come unless we go out to do His will.

His will can never be done unless His Kingdom comes.

We are God's fellow workers.

Help me, O God, both to expect great things from Thee, and to attempt great things for Thee. Deliver me both from effortless trust in Thy grace, and from overconfidence in my own efforts, unaided by Thee. Enable me to say, with glad assurance, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." AMEN.

FIFTEENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"Thy will be done." MATTHEW 6:10.

It might be well if sometimes, in saying the Lord's Prayer, we should stop after repeating this petition, "Thy will be done," and ask, "By whom?"

How do I expect that that will shall be "done"? Am I asking God to do His own will? That is a foolish and unnecessary prayer. Am I expressing a vague hope that some one, somewhere, will do the will of God? That is a poor and worthless request.

No! I never offer rightly this petition, until I offer it as a pledge, no less than as a request. I promise God that, just so far as I can, I shall see that His will is done; and I pour out my desire and hope that it may be done far beyond my poor powers to do it. But it must be a pledge, or it is powerless.

"Thy will be done on earth."
On bended knee we pray;
Then leave our prayer before the throne,
And rise and go our way.

And earth is filled with woe,
And war, and evil, still,
For lack of men whose prayer is, "Lo,
I come to do Thy will."

Thy will be done on earth?
Lord, grant me grace to see
That if Thy will is to be done,
It must be done by me.

FIFTEENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." MATTHEW 6:10.

We are quite too apt to see in this petition only the submissive cry of a resigned heart. We save it for hours of defeat and pain and trouble, recalling how Jesus in the Garden said, "Not my will, but Thine, be done."

It is that. And with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

But it is more. Jesus the fighter, the hero, the adventurer, teaches us this prayer. There is in the world a *will of God* to be *done,* a holy and high purpose to be achieved. This is a prayer that that strong purpose may triumph.

"Thy will be done." Not with bowed head alone
In meek submission, would we say the words;
Not only in the garden's agony
May this be our prayer, as it was our Lord's.
But through the smoke and tumult of our life
We catch a glimpse of glory to be won;
Our Captain calls! We plunge into the fight,
And shout our battle cry, "Thy will be done!"

FIFTEENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in the heavens." MATTHEW 6:10.

Jesus did not say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." He said, "as it is done in *the heavens.*" Was He thinking of the sky, where the stars move in perfect harmony? So earlier prophets had spoken. Amos and Isaiah called on the people to lift up their eyes and look at the stars, if they would see the glory of God.

It brings a new meaning and beauty into this ancient petition, when we offer it in this form. It fits our modern mood. We look up into the starry sky with emotions such as could not be felt before the coming of modern astronomy with its revelation of measureless spaces, and countless worlds, all moving in majestic obedience to unvarying law.

How glorious this little earth of ours would be, if the will of God were done here "as it is in the heavens"; if nations and races and classes lived and worked together as do the stars; if all the men and women on earth lived their lives and did their work as an orchestra plays, or as "the stars perform their shining."

That is what we pray for in this petition.

Almighty God, Whose glory the heavens are telling, and the sea His might, and thinking creatures everywhere herald; Whose is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory; grant that in our little lives and in this little world in which we live, Thy holy and blessed will may be done with that perfect order and quietness with which the stars in their courses obey Thee. AMEN.

SIXTEENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:11–13.

"Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

He who rightly offers such petitions will not only seek provision for his own wants, forgiveness for his own faults, protection against the moral dangers that threaten his life. He says, not "my," but "our." He longs to see all men with enough to eat, happily forgiven, secure against temptation

and evil. Such a prayer is a pledge, a promise to our Father to do our best to make a social order here on earth where the comforts of living shall come to all, where all shall be conscious of God's forgiving love, where no one shall be needlessly exposed to temptation or to moral danger.

It is an insult to God to ask Him for any ends I am not eager to seek and serve myself. To offer these petitions for ourselves and others is to pledge our best and most earnest efforts to build here a common life in which these ends may be readily attained by all.

God help me so to pray!

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Good Shepherd of the sheep, Who camest to seek the lost, and to gather them into Thy fold, have compassion upon those who have wandered from Thee; feed those who hunger, cause the weary to lie down in Thy pastures, bind up those who are broken in heart, and strengthen those who are weak, that we, relying on Thy care and being comforted by Thy love, may abide in Thy guidance to our lives' end; for Thy name's sake. AMEN.

SIXTEENTH WEEK, MONDAY

"For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." MATTHEW 6:13.

It is disturbing to some to find these words omitted from the Revised Version. They are not found in the earliest manuscripts. They seem to form an addition to the original prayer.

When we think about it a little, there is a lesson in this fact. That the church should have added this ending shows how natural and instinctive a response it forms to the whole prayer. Our Lord teaches us this prayer, so simple yet so

profound. And our hearts respond with this ascription to God of all the kingdom, the power, and the glory. It is His kingdom we serve, not our own. "Man's chief end is to glorify God," not to glorify himself. This ending is the natural and right response of the human heart to the teaching of our Lord.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, world without end." AMEN.

SIXTEENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:14, 15.
Read also MARK 2:1–5.

What is the most important part of this great but simple prayer? A useless question, when all is of such priceless worth.

Yet when, after making a statement, the author goes back and emphasizes one particular phrase, we are very sure that a special importance attaches to that phrase in His view.

When Jesus has ended the prayer He would teach His disciples, He goes back and selects the one petition "Forgive us our debts." Does not that indicate that to His mind our supreme need is forgiveness? More than we need bread, or deliverance from trouble, we need the cleansing grace of God to set us free from sin.

How vividly this is emphasized in the story of the paralytic. Brought to Jesus because he was helplessly diseased, he yet needed something even more than he needed healing; and so the first words Jesus spoke to him were "Son, thy sins are forgiven."

More than anything or everything else, we need to be right with God, through His forgiving love.

Gracious Father, give us perfect pardon for what is past, and a perfect repentance for all our evils; that for the time to come we may, with pure spirits, with broken and contrite hearts, with sanctified lips and holy desires, serve Thee religiously, walk humbly with Thee our God, converse justly and charitably with men, and possess our souls in patience and holiness, and our bodies in sanctification and honour; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SIXTEENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:14, 15.
Read also MATTHEW 18:21–35.

Nothing is clearer in the teaching of our Lord than that the unforgiving cannot find forgiveness. We must freely forgive, if we would be forgiven. The teaching of the Lord is clear and absolute on that point.

How this solemn truth sends us to search our hearts, that we may cast out thence all malice and bitterness, give over every grudge and see that we harbor no resentment against anyone. Only if we are thus clean from an unforgiving temper can we pray with any hope of being heard.

Let me carry this conviction with me through all the intercourse of this day and of all my days; that it may keep me in the right spirit and attitude towards all men and women and children with whom I have to do.

O God our Father, help us to put away all bitterness and wrath and evil speaking, and hard feeling; and to be kind

one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as we pray to Thee for Christ's sake to forgive us. So may we grow daily in likeness to Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SIXTEENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:16–18.

Fasting was a very important part of the religion of Jesus' day. It has ceased to play any very large part in the religion of the spirit.

Yet that for which it stands can never lose its value or significance. For the essence of fasting is this, is it not, the giving up of a lower good for the sake of a higher? Or the sacrifice of personal pleasure for the sake of another's good?

We cannot have everything. If we would hold to the higher good, we must sometimes let go the lower. That is the real inner meaning of fasting.

Now it is easy to mar the beauty of such an act by doing it with a bad grace. We want credit for our sacrifice; and so in our manner we stress the seriousness of the act. Jesus would have us make such sacrifices with glad faces and joyous manner, knowing how well worth while it is to let go dear enjoyments that we may win a higher and unseen good.

To heed this counsel would make our lives lovely and radiant, when now, too often, they cast a cloud over the spirits of the very people for whom we are making the sacrifice.

O God, the Giver of all good, we bless Thee for all the dear and homely delights of life. We thank Thee also for

the noble right to give up the little joys and the lower goods when they get in the way of our own or another's higher gain. Enable us, by Thy grace, always to make such choices with cheerfulness; that so we may add brightness and not cloud to the world around us; and may belong to the blessed society of those who love to walk on the high places. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SIXTEENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:16–18.

Here our Lord continues His strong teaching of the necessity of inwardness. As with our giving and our praying, so with our fasting, our self-denial, our giving up for the sake of God and our soul's good, we should have our hearts set on God's approval rather than on the praise of men.

Take to heart once more the solemn lesson. No one has begun to learn how to live well who cares very much about the impression he makes on other people. He only has found the true way of life who cares supremely for God's good opinion, and lets the world's opinion count for little.

> "Teach us to look, in all our ends,
> On Thee for Judge, and not our friends;
> That we with Thee may walk uncowed
> By fear or favor of the crowd."

"It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion. It is easy in solitude to live after one's own. But the great man is he who, in the midst of the crowd, preserves with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

SIXTEENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:19, 20.

What does Jesus mean by "treasure in heaven"? Is He taking an "otherworldly" view, urging us to neglect the interests of this present life and to live for the life to come?

Such asceticism, such otherworldliness, is foreign to His thought. By "treasures in heaven" He means that which enriches the inward and unseen life. *Things* can be lost, stolen, spoiled. Qualities of the spirit, culture, character, enlargement and refinement of soul, these cannot be taken away or destroyed.

> "What entered into thee
> That was, is, and shall be."

Put your care, your thought, your treasure, says our Lord, into that which will deepen, heighten, strengthen, enrich, and beautify the unseen goodness of your own spirit, or of the spirit of another. So shall you be investing in the true riches.

O God our Father, we thank Thee for the joy of the senses, for sights and sounds that enrich the life, for the beautiful things with which our lives abound. But we bless Thee more for the unseen glory of life; for that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, but which Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee. Keep us, we pray, from being slaves to the outward; give us the eye of faith, and the soul attuned to the inner music of life; that we may not fail of winning the true and eternal riches, the life that is life indeed. AMEN.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." MATTHEW 6:21.

What a wonderful reason for urging us to put our treasure in the real and inward goods of life! We might call this text "The Law of the Heart's Disposal." You can't put your heart where you will. Love is not determined by logic, or by will power. Yet the whole joy and satisfaction of life may lie in the answer to the question, *Where is your heart?*

We cannot put the heart where we will. But we can put the treasure where we will; and the heart follows the treasure. You know you ought to love your neighbour. You do not love him. What can you do? You can begin to serve him, to spend your treasure on him and on his good; and your heart will come to rest where your treasure is. That is one of God's kindly laws.

O Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto Thy people that they may love the things that Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of this life, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK, MONDAY

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." MATTHEW 6:21.

The first and greatest commandment of all is that we love the Lord our God with all our heart.

But that is exactly what we cannot do by command. The

heart has a way of going where it will, not where it is told to go. If we were commanded to serve God, to do something specific for God, we might hope to fulfil the command. But how can we love God, unless the heart naturally feels such love?

We can begin to give Him our treasure; we can serve Him and His interests; and the heart will follow the treasure. It is not an impossible command. We can begin to love Him with the *mind,* and the strength; and we shall find love for Him growing up more and more in the heart.

O God, Who hast told us to keep all Thy heavenly commandments by loving Thee and our neighbour, enable us so to serve Thee that we shall come to love Thee; and so to seek our neighbour's good that we shall come to love him; that so our souls may be redeemed and transformed by an indwelling and ever-deepening affection for the highest and for the lowliest. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 7:21–27.

Every true Christian longs to have others see Christ, love Him, and live in Him. How can we persuade others of the truth and beauty of our religion?

The only way is by *making our Christianity work.* It is the one who hears *and does* who counts, says our Lord.

Would you make others see the beauty and power of your religion?

Take some word of Jesus, however simple, and *do* it. That sort of demonstration has more effective influence than all the arguments of all the doctors.

The supreme business of every Christian today is to make Christianity work.

O God, help me to be not only a hearer of the word, but a doer of the same; that I may be not as one who beholdeth his face in a glass and goeth away and remembereth not; but rather a doer that worketh; that so the beauty of Thy divine life may shine in and through my little life and simple deeds; to the glory of Thy name. AMEN.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 7:7–11.

"Ask; seek; knock," said Jesus, in giving directions for our praying. Was He saying the same thing three times? No. Recall His warnings against "vain repetitions," and "idle words." He never used an unnecessary word or phrase.

Why then the three? Because they fit three religious types, each of which may rightly pray in its own way—the mystical, the rational, the practical. One "asks," another "seeks," the third "knocks." Each finds God. Let not one type despise the other.

"Three doors there are in the temple
Where men go up to pray;
And they that wait at the outer gate
May enter by either way.

There are some that pray by asking;
They lie on the Master's breast,
And, shunning the strife of the lower life,
They utter their cry for rest.

There are some that pray by seeking;
They doubt where their reason fails;
Yet their mind's despair is the ancient prayer
To touch the print of the nails.

There are some that pray by knocking;
They put their strength to the wheel;
For they have no time for thoughts sublime;
They can only act what they feel.

Father, give each his answer,
Each in his kindred way;
Adapt Thy light to his form of night,
And grant him his needed day."

SEVENTEENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 7:7–11.

Look again at this oft-quoted passage.

We find in it three companion pictures of prayer, three steps in a process, or an art.

Here is a man who wants to know God. *"Ask,"* says the Master. Yes; but how can I ask anyone for anything until I find him? Well, *"seek* and you shall find." So you seek; but you seem to come up against a stone wall, a closed door. Then the Master says, *"Knock,* and it shall be opened unto you."

How better could He impress on us the great fact that prayer is an art, to be patiently practiced and followed, rather than an easy exercise to be thoughtlessly used? Men spend years in acquiring facility with the violin. Why should I expect facility in the nobler art of living with God on easier terms?

Nothing is surer than that the one who seeks until he finds, and knocks until the door is opened, will at last find God at home, and can "ask what he will, and it shall be done unto him."

O God, Who art not far from any one of us; and yet Who art found only by them that seek Thee, and known only by them that knock until the door is opened; grant unto us such an earnest desire to know Thee and live with Thee that we shall not be content until we find our way to Thy home, and enter in to dwell with Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:22, 23.

Here is a marvellous room full of treasures of surpassing richness. A man stands in the midst of it, but can see nothing of its glory. Turn on the light! The room is flooded with radiance. But still the man cannot see, though the room is full of light.

For the man is blind.

What a parable of the inward life!

There are men who stand in this world of ours, while around them shines the radiance of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." They cannot see it. They declare with contempt that it is not there, that those who say they see it and live in its light are deceived by illusions of their own imagination. And all the time the sad truth is that these doubters are blind. "The god of this age hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the gospel

of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should dawn upon them."

Lord, open our eyes, that in Thy light we may see light!

Almighty and everlasting God, the brightness of faithful souls, fill the world with Thy glory, we pray Thee, and show Thyself by the radiance of Thy light, to all Thy children among all the nations of the world: through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Light of the world. AMEN.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." MATTHEW 6:23.

The worst darkness is not that in which we grope our way when the outer light fails; nor even that which settles upon our minds when we face insoluble problems. It is that which comes when the inner power of vision is seared by sin or by wilfulness.

For, just as one can impair or destroy his eyesight by carelessness or vice; so can one destroy the power of the soul to discern high and holy things. "How great is *that* darkness."

Read Tennyson's "Vision of Sin," if you would have an impressive forthsetting of the searing, blinding effect of sin upon the soul.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

O God, from Whom all holy desires, and all true thoughts do proceed, keep our hearts pure, honest, and holy: that so our inward power of vision may grow more keen as we go on our way, until we see Thee face to face, and dwell forever in Thy blessed light. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:24.

Jesus is not here setting forth a duty; He is declaring a law. He does not say, "No man should serve two masters." He says, "No man *can*." It is useless to try.

Yet how often we keep up the hopeless effort to live a divided life. We try to serve "God and money" at the same time. It cannot be done.

We can serve God *with* money. We cannot serve God *and* money.

It is a solemn thought for an age like ours, which takes so much thought for economic success, that Jesus warns us so solemnly against money as a danger. One of the greatest Christian scholars of recent times tells us that Jesus felt that the three great enemies are "Money, Worry, and Selfishness."

Have we the mind of Christ in this? Are we one-tenth as much afraid of money as we are of the lack of it?

O God, grant us, we pray, simplicity and wholeness of heart. Help us to set our affections on the inward treasures far more than on the things that can be held, earned, spent, and hoarded. Help us to look on all of life through the eyes of Jesus, and to care so wholly for the service of God that no other lords shall have claim or hold over us. For His sake. AMEN.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
LUKE 12:13–21.

Here was a man who had neglected his soul. He had been busy about many things, occupied with making money. Now he remembers that he has a soul, and he wants to commune with it. What has he to talk about? Food and drink and possessions; that is all.

> " I will say to my soul . . . ,
> But God said, 'Thou fool!' "

What are you saying to your soul? What is God saying to it? It is terrible to be saying one thing to your soul while God says another. It is the crown and glory of life to be saying to your soul what God would have you say.

Speak to my soul, O God; and give me grace to hear Thy word and to echo it. Keep me from saying to myself only that which reveals the shallowness, outwardness, pettiness of that self. By Thine inward grace fill me and inspire me with Thine own spirit, that in my inmost heart may ever sound those words and ideals with which Thou art well pleased. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:24, 25.

Notice that word, "therefore." Why does the Master give us this drastic command to cast out from our lives worry about external things? Is it because He wants us to

be calm and contented and at peace? No; that is not the main reason. It is because He wants us to take as an inexorable law of life that we cannot serve two masters, that no one can at once serve God and mammon. "Therefore" He tells us to cast out worry. For he who worries over outward things gives clearest evidence that he is not wholly serving God.

Worry is the sign of a divided allegiance, the proof of lack of trust in God. Worry has no more place in a true Christian than fever has in the body of a healthy man or woman.

Give us, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downwards; give us an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; give us an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow upon us also, O Lord, understanding to know Thee, diligence to seek Thee, wisdom to find Thee, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious." MATTHEW 6:25.

We should thank God for the Revised Version of the New Testament if only because of this rendering, in place of the misleading "Take no thought." What Jesus is here urging is not carelessness, that concealed selfishness which lets others supply our needs; but the absence of worry, when we have done our best.

It has been a seductive temptation to some in every age to take what Jesus says about not taking thought, with His

illustration about the birds, as inciting us to live thoughtlessly, as the birds do. His teaching is not a condemnation of forethought, or care, or thrift; it is a call to cast out the carking, rusting vice of worry. Jesus took thought. If He had not, He could not have saved us. But Jesus did not worry. If He had, He could not have saved us. Our duty and privilege is to follow Him.

O God, in Whose care are all the issues of life, give to us, we beseech Thee, a steady trust in Thee that shall never fail. Enable us to take thought for all of life that is within our control; and to trust Thee gladly and unwaveringly for all that lies outside our own responsibility. So may we serve Thee and our fellow men with that cheerful courage and assurance which those should show who believe in Thy goodness. AMEN.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"Is not the life more than food? And the body than raiment?" MATTHEW 6:25.

If only we Christians of the twentieth century could catch the splendid assurance of Jesus that inward and spiritual things count for most! He looked on those who had nothing to think of except food and clothes with pity, as wasting on concerns of less importance their God-given energies and lives.

"Isn't there something more to think of," He exclaims, "than food and clothing? Is that all your life amounts to, all that your body can be used for?"

It might give some of us a new and better ideal of the meaning and use of life, to catch a vision of the Master watching us as we give our main interest and effort to out-

ward things, and asking, "Is not *life* something more than that?"

O God, the Protector of all who trust in Thee, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy; that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we miss not the things eternal. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" MATTHEW 6:26.

What is the argument here? Is it, "Look at the birds! See how they get along without taking thought. You ought to live in that way, without barns and harvests, and business undertakings, and all the rest?"

No; the Master's argument is rather this: "See the birds. They lack your advantages. They have no way of foreseeing, providing, caring for their own wants. Yet they get along. Your Father (note, He says "your" Father feeds them, not "their" Father; God is the Father of men, as He is not of other creatures)—your Father feeds them. How much less cause or excuse have you for worry, whom God has endowed with brains and hands and foresight and capacity for profitable labour."

That is the message. Not that we be like the birds; but that we, with our superior advantages and equipment should worry even less than they do.

Forgive me, O God, that with all that Thou has done for me, and in me, to fit me for a free and glad and abundant

life, I should yet worry and fear as Thy defenseless and helpless creatures never do. Help me to trust in Thee; and, with the full and cheerful use of all that with which Thou hast so richly endowed me, to trust Thee so fully that my heart shall be kept in perfect peace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" MATTHEW 6:27.

This is a picturesque way of asking, "What good is there in worrying? What can it accomplish? Did anyone ever lengthen his life by one foot through worrying?" Must we not answer, "No, indeed. Worrying has shortened many a life. It has lengthened none, though it may have made life seem longer!"

Why then indulge in a practice useless, harmful, and irreligious? What excuse is there for it?

There is a Chinese proverb which runs: "The legs of the duck are short; the legs of the stork are long. You cannot make the stork's legs short, or the duck's legs long. Why worry?"

Useless; dangerous; proof of a lack of faith in God. Why should anyone, and how can a Christian, keep up such a habit?

Give me, O God, a soul at once keen and calm, eager and at peace, that I may enter with zest into life with all its interests, and face without fear all its possibilities. Let this mind be in me, which was also in Christ Jesus. For His sake. AMEN.

NINETEENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 6:28–30.

How impracticable this counsel seems! "God clothes the grass; let Him clothe you, without troubling yourself about it."

Is that the meaning? Are the nearly naked "holy men" of the East really nearer to the ideal of Jesus than a well-dressed man or woman?

Get below the surface of the words. You never find Jesus till you are at the heart of things. Notice His judgment of values, which puts the beauty of the lily above the splendour of Solomon's raiment. Does not that imply clearly that true appreciation sees more real beauty in that which is fitting and natural than in that which is artificial and extravagant?

So long as the stiff gorgeous robes of a king seem lovelier to us than the grace and perfection of a flower, we *must* worry about our clothes. The man or woman who comes to see the beauty of the simple and natural is on the way towards a life that can have higher concerns than clothing.

"Let the unknown tomorrow
Bring with it what it may.
It can bring with it nothing
But He will bear us through;
Who gives the lilies clothing
Will clothe His children too.
Beneath the spreading heavens
No creature but is fed;
And He Who feeds the ravens
Will give His children bread."

NINETEENTH WEEK, MONDAY

"Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." MATTHEW 6:32.

If that is so, why worry? And if that is not so, there is no truth in the Christian religion. God knows our needs. Why should we let anxiety cloud our sky and darken our way? Why should we load our prayers with concern about outward things, as if it were necessary to keep our Father informed as to our needs?

It is right and wise to pray to God for anything that seems to us a right and worthy object of prayer, just as a loving parent will welcome childish requests, however unnecessary. But there is a childishness about much of our praying, which we ought to outgrow. If we have caught the spirit of Jesus, we shall pray most for the great, inward, eternal gifts, leaving all the rest quietly, gladly, trustfully, to the Father Who does not need to be informed about our needs.

Grant, O God, to us Thy children grace to trust Thee implicitly, and a heart set on the real and abiding values of life. So may we rest in the assurance of Thy knowledge and love; and so may our fellowship with Thee be free from the load of concern about little and trifling things; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

NINETEENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." MATTHEW 6:32.

Is it then wrong to "carry everything to God in prayer?" No. But it may be unworthy of us and of our friendship with

God. If one were privileged to visit a great friend, would he talk to him about trivial, personal matters?

Prayer is always purer and more worthy when it deals with inner and eternal concerns.

That true servant and friend of God, Maltbie Babcock, when a boy once lost a knife which he treasured. He wondered if he ought to pray for the return of the knife. Finally he prayed, "O God, give me sense enough to remember where I left that knife."

That was a right and good prayer.

The real objection to carrying trivial and outward wants to God in prayer is not that we doubt the possibility of His answering such prayers, but that we know we should be ashamed of the unworthiness of such praying.

O God, grant me such freedom of access to Thee, such reality of fellowship, that I shall feel no constraint, but shall talk with Thee as a man talketh with his friend. But deliver me, I pray, from undue familiarity, from the use of my sacred privilege of communion with Thee for petty and personal ends. Help me ever to walk with Thee on the high places; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

NINETEENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." MATTHEW 6:33.

Jesus is still thinking about our praying, as well as about our living. Indeed, prayer and life never suffered, in His experience or view, that divorce which they sometimes find in us.

When you pray, when you work, all through your life,

set first and desire first two things, God's kingdom and God's righteousness.

Here is the clearest forthsetting of what our Master judges to be the chief ends of life. *The Kingdom:* that organization, or reorganization, of human society which shall realize the holy and loving will and purpose of God. The *righteousness of God:* individual character and experience which shall conform to God's ideal—are those my chief aims, ends, and desires?

The answer to that question will decide my worth in the eyes of Jesus our Lord and our Judge.

O God, Who hast filled this world with many attractive objects, help me to look upon it all with the "eyes of the glory of God"; and so to be able to discriminate clearly not only between the bad and the good, but also between the good and the best. Enable me by Thy grace to seek ever the highest and noblest ends; and so to win Thy righteousness and to further Thy Kingdom; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is our Ruler and our righteousness. AMEN.

NINETEENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." MATTHEW 6:33.

This saying, clear as it is, has been misunderstood by some Christians. They read the chapter, and find that Jesus has been talking about food and clothing and the goods of the outward life; and then they come upon this assurance that, if one seeks first the Kingdom and righteousness of God, "all these things shall be added" to him. "Good," says their subconscious self to them, "then I can be sure of having all these outward goods, if I just trust God and give myself to Him."

But they fail to see the simple fact that if one serves the Kingdom of God, and seeks His righteousness, *because* he can thereby secure the outward goods, he is not really setting first the Kingdom and the righteousness. It is the outward gain that forms his real motive. No one can really be seeking God's kingdom and righteousness who does not care so wholly for these great ends that he disregards everything else.

Deliver me, O my Father, from all seeking of Thee for selfish ends. May I never think to myself, or complain to others, that my faith in God has failed because I have not prospered. Keep me from using outward comfort as a gauge of inward godliness, or counting godliness a way of gain. Fill my heart with such an entire love for Thee that I can care greatly about nothing lower; through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

NINETEENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." MATTHEW 6:33.

Did you ever notice the significant words, "added unto you?"

Outward possessions, advantages, gifts, may be blessings or curses. They lift some nearer to heaven; they drag others down to hell. What makes the difference? The *person* to whom they come.

"Added unto *you*." But, "you" must be worthy, or they will hurt rather than help. Take a simple illustration from arithmetic. Add to the size of a minus quantity, and its value is less; add to a plus quantity and its value is greater. Multi-

ply a zero any number of times, and it remains worth exactly nothing.

So it is with character and possessions. All that can be given or won, of prosperity, welfare, riches, outward gain, may bless the life that has positive value, curse the life that is wrong, and make no difference to the characterless life. God's richest gifts can do you no good unless there is a "you" to which they can be *added,* a "you" that is right with God, and set on His Kingdom and His righteousness.

O God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto Thy people that they may love the things which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the manifold changes of this life, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

NINETEENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." MATTHEW 6:33.

Lives that have been faithful to God, setting first His Kingdom and His righteousness, are tempted at times to feel that this great assurance fails; for "all these things" have not been "added unto them."

We must remember always that Jesus had in mind not merely, perhaps not chiefly, the individual life in the present time; but the outworking of a true social order. It is true, beyond question, that the more a group, a nation, collectively seeks first the Kingdom and the righteousness of God, the more surely will they achieve a sound and enduring social and economic order that shall be just and happy.

If I, by steadfast devotion to these great ends, can help bring that better social order, I have the fulfilment of the assurance, whether or no my personal affairs prosper; and I shall also have in my soul the great asset of the knowledge that I am working with God for the welfare of man.

O God, Who hast made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on the face of the earth, and Who, by Thy providence, art leading mankind into a deepening realization of its interdependence, grant, we pray, that all men, and especially those who have influence and power, and are entrusted with the responsibility of leadership, may unitedly seek Thy righteousness and Thy kingdom; that so all men may be blest through the coming of Thy Kingdom of perfect righteousness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

TWENTIETH WEEK, SUNDAY

"And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." LUKE 17:20, 21.

When Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God, He had in mind the "summum bonum," the chief end of life, "what all the world's a-seeking."

Where shall I find it for myself? Where shall the whole world find it?

Jesus brings to our questing age the same answer He gave to the restless, inquiring spirit of His own day. "Where is this kingdom?" they asked. His answer means two things:

1. "The Kingdom is among you." It is not remote from present things. Right amid the daily concerns of the present

you may find something of that Kingdom which you can serve.

2. "The Kingdom is within you." It is an experience you can have now. It lies not in the realm of outward comfort so much as in the realm of inward satisfaction.

The story of Sir Launfal, who rode far in search of the Grail, only to find it at his own door, is a parable of our life.

O God, Who art not far from anyone of us, in Whom we live and move and have our being, enable us, we pray, while ever mindful of the far and distant glory of life, to be awake to humble and present ways of doing Thy will, and finding Thy Kingdom. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

TWENTIETH WEEK, MONDAY

"Be not therefore anxious for the morrow. Sufficient unto the day is the evil therof." MATTHEW 6:34.

There is a certain kind of care for coming days that is right and wise. A thoughtful essayist once said that the essence of wise living is so to live today as one would wish to have lived twenty years later.

Jesus took that sort of care for the time to come. He ever had the long stretches of eternity before His eyes in His planning and judging. He took thought in Gethsemane; and much of the steadiness with which He met the awful strain of the morrow was rooted in the agony of that night.

But He gives us here a needed caution, not to worry over what may happen tomorrow. Worry does no good; it weakens one, makes one less able to meet the crisis when it comes. It is the high privilege of the Christian to meet what

comes today, trusting God's good guidance and grace for what will come tomorrow.

"Lord, for tomorrow and its needs
I do not pray;
But keep me, guide me, love me, Lord,
Just for today."

TWENTIETH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 7:1–5.

When we contrast our blessings and advantages with those of our neighbours, we are apt to magnify theirs and minimize ours.

But when we set together our faults and theirs, we tend to reverse the process. We excuse ourselves, and blame other people. Sometimes we even excuse in our own conduct what we condemn in the conduct of others.

Jesus tells us we should do exactly the opposite. "Think of your own defects and faults as beams; of your neighbour's faults as motes."

Be strict in judging yourself; generous in judging others. Such is the rule of Jesus. And the keeping of that rule might transform our personal relations.

Make us sensitive, O God, to our own sins and errors, more sensitive than to the failings of others. Help us to be generous in criticism of our brethren, unsparing in self-criticism. So may we be healed of our own faults, and be helpful in meeting the needs of others; in the name and spirit of Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTIETH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 7:1–6.

Here shines forth the exquisite sanity and balance of Jesus' mind. No sooner has He warned us against judging, than He adds a warning against an undiscriminating, sentimental temper.

Judgment of a sort is required, if one is to adapt gifts and services to different kinds of people.

If you have a dog or a pig, for which you want to provide good care, it would be wildly foolish to take the dog to church, or give the pig a pearl necklace. Such attentions are simply not suitable.

How often our giving, our service, our ministry, is spoiled by being unsuitable. Study the one with whom you are dealing and adapt your gift, your care, to the nature and needs of that person. The whole matter of charitable work might be lifted to a higher plane by observance of this wise counsel of the Lord Jesus.

Look upon our foolishness, O God, with pity and compassion; and by Thy good Spirit so work upon our inmost nature that we shall have and show that blessed union of generous love and common sense which Jesus had so perfectly; that all our ministry to others may be helpful, and no good impulse be wasted in unwise action. This we ask in the name of Thy perfect Servant, our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

TWENTIETH WEEK, THURSDAY

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." MATTHEW 7:12.

We call it the "Golden Rule." What do we mean? It is our name for it, not Jesus' name.

Perhaps we mean that it is *ornamental,* for special occasions, too high and fine for common use. Is that the meaning of "golden" for us?

Or do we mean that it is *Utopian?* Do we use "golden" as in the phrase "Golden Age"? Something ideal, to be dreamed of?

Or do we mean that this rule is the *standard* of living, as gold is the standard of currency?

What a difference it makes which meaning is in our minds when we call this counsel the "Golden" Rule! Jesus meant it to be the standard for our every day and every act.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour; and further us with Thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy name; and finally by Thy mercy may obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTIETH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 7:13, 14.

Does this sound like Jesus? Would it not rather fit some bigot, sure that his own little path is the only way to God?

But when we see the real meaning and application of this saying, we see that there is in it not the slightest justification for the temper of the narrow-minded fanatic. Jesus is drawing a picture, rather a pair of companion pictures. This is the message that comes from them to our souls: Go with the crowd, take the easy way, drift along thoughtlessly, and you go down to eternal loss. You must find and keep your own single path, if you would be safe and right. And you must tread it steadily, no matter how hard it proves.

It is not that there is but one way for all. The truth is that each of us has his own one way to God and goodness and life, and he must find and tread that path for himself. There is no other way.

O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself; and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee. Stir that restlessness within us, we beseech Thee; fill us with a deep divine discontent: that we may be impelled by that inner urge to climb and keep climbing, until we stand on the heights with Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTIETH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 4:1–12.

Is the personal, practical use of the Bible dying out? If so, it means a great loss.

We may take a lesson from our Lord. He was "tempted in all points, like as we are"; yet He was "without sin," as we are not; He held firm, where we too readily yield.

How did He win?

The story of His great temptation shows Him winning *by use of the Bible.* Each temptation He met by saying, "It is written."

Consider these plain facts: *His Bible was poorer than ours;* we have the riches of the New Testament.

His need was less than ours; He had in Himself resources we lack.

He had the Scriptures in His heart, ready for instant use. If we were armed as He was, we might win as He did.

O God, Who by Thy Holy Spirit hast caused the Scriptures to be written for our admonition and comfort, make us responsive and keep us faithful to Thy blessed Word. May we hide it in our hearts that we may not sin against Thee. May it be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. So guide us by Thy counsels, and give us strength to overcome through Thy Word abiding in us. For the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, the Living Word. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 8:5–13.

What is faith?

How many arguments and debates have gathered about that question!

Here in this passage, Jesus says of a certain man, "I have not found so great faith" in anyone else.

What was this man's faith? Did he hold certain orthodox convictions or opinions? There is no hint of that. Was he a loyal church member and attendant? Nothing is said about that. Was he a highly endowed mystic, who saw visions? We do not know.

All we do know is that he *believed that Jesus could meet his need.* He had no doubt that, just as he could give orders and be obeyed, so God can act and needs be met.

That was then, is now, and must be through the ages, the faith that can move mountains. Such faith it is that enables one to "attempt great things for God, and expect great things from God."

Lord, increase our faith. Though it be but as a grain of mustard seed, let it grow to more and more, we pray. Whatever may be doubtful or unknown to us, grant that we may never doubt our Father's goodness or His willingness to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK, MONDAY

Read
LUKE 4:16–20.

"He closed the book." Where did He close it? Turn back to the prophecy of Isaiah, the sixtieth chapter, and see where Jesus stopped reading. You find that He stopped at a comma; He did not finish the sentence.

Why did He stop there? Because it went on about "the day of vengeance." He exercised the right to leave out from the Old Testament all that did not harmonize with His faith in the Fatherhood and love of God.

How clear is the assurance that we have the right, and the duty, when we come upon parts of the earlier revelation, that are inconsistent with the "light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," to "close the book," to leave those outgrown sayings of the earlier time out of the Bible that we use, thanking God for the richer and truer revelation of Him that has come through Christ our Lord.

O God, we bless Thee that through Thy ever-growing revelation of Thyself we have the word of prophecy made more

sure. May we take heed to it, as unto a lamp that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 8:28–34.

What a strange scene! The people of that little town came out to see Jesus; but only to beg Him to go away. Think of asking Jesus to leave the country!

Why did they make such a request? He had healed a demon-ridden man. In so doing He had solved a problem that had long vexed the town, removed an unpleasant and menacing condition.

But—in healing the man a lot of pigs had been destroyed. That they could not stand. Jesus was interfering with property interests. His presence was too expensive a luxury. They cared more about pigs than about men; more about property than about persons.

Were they not foolish? Be careful how you throw stones at these men, lest you hear the crash of your own glass houses. Are there no places today, no realms of action, into which we would rather not have Jesus intrude?

During the Great War, a man in England circulated copies of the Sermon on the Mount; just the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of the Gospel according to Matthew, without note or comment. He was imprisoned for activity prejudicial to the national defense. There should be no places in our life where Jesus would be unwelcome. But are there none?

O Thou God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always when we worship we pray for the grace of Thy presence.

Yet too often we walk in places where Thy presence would embarrass us, and do deeds we would not have searched by the eyes of the glory of God. Search us, O God, and know our hearts. Try us, and know our thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in us. And lead us in the way everlasting. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 8:28–34.

How often and how easily we think and say that, if Jesus should come among us, we would welcome Him with joy.

Perhaps these people in Gadara had said that. They had heard how His presence had blessed the towns on the other side of the lake, Capernaum, Magdala, Tiberias. They had said, "Would that He might come here. How we would greet Him!"

And now He has come; He has worked a wonderful miracle. And they wish He would go.

Thomas Carlyle once heard a pious woman say with fervor how happy she would be if the Lord Jesus should come again. The hater of sham turned his stern, sad eyes upon her, and said: "Yes, Madam, if Jesus should come in power and glory, I would expect a card from you, 'Mrs. So-and-so at home on such a day to meet our Lord and Saviour.' But if He came as He did of old, to cry woe on the Pharisees, you would be the first to exclaim, 'Take the man out and hang Him.'"

Each Christian of us may well think on the two stories, of the Gadarenes, and of the woman Carlyle rebuked, and ask, "Lord, is it I?"

Forgive us, O Lord, that often we deny so thoroughly in our lives what we profess so easily with our lips. Forgive us that we draw back and are afraid, when Thou in Christ dost draw too near to us, and mingle too intimately in our concerns. Help us to desire nothing on earth or in heaven above Thy blessed presence, though it consume us and our ways. Out of the consuming fire bring that character that shall endure to eternity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 9:1–8.

This is one of the noteworthy instances in which Jesus healed a man who was seriously ill. If ever a need was obvious, surely this man's need was clear.

Yet Jesus, looking at the man, before He did anything for his healing, handled the matter of his sin.

Could anything make more absolutely clear the fact that to the mind of the Master moral conditions, the state of the heart, always take precedence of the state of the body?

If Jesus is to help me, I must let Him first minister to my inward condition. His first concern always is for the soul. And my mind is not as His mind until my first concern also is for the inward, unseen life, rather than for the most extreme need of the outward condition.

O God, our Maker, I thank Thee that Thou carest for all which Thou hast made; for our bodies, our daily need of bread, of health, of goods. But I pray Thee to make me so to partake of the mind of Christ that I shall care far more for the hidden, unseen life of the soul than for all

that can be seen and felt. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 9:1–8.

"Jesus, seeing their faith." How did He see their faith? They said not a word, made no professions. He saw their faith by and in what they *did*.

That is always the final test of the reality of faith. Do you believe in the Bible? The true answer is what you *do* with the Bible, not what you *say* about it. Do you believe in prayer? The test of your faith is the amount and character of your praying. Do you believe in the teachings and spirit of Christ? The answer is in your deeds, your daily life.

That is the test the world applies. And one reason the world esteems Christianity so lightly is that we, who profess it, do not live by it.

O God, Who comest to us in Jesus Christ our Lord, give to me a heart set to obey thy commandments, a spirit that earnestly desires to live in Thy light and walk in Thy ways; that my light may so shine before men that they may see my good works, and glorify our Father Who is in heaven. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 9:9–13.

The conclusion has often been thoughtlessly drawn from this scene and this saying that Jesus' mission is supremely

to the sick, the abnormal, the "down and out"; that religion is especially for the depressed and weary. As a result of such a view, the strong and well and happy have too often felt that they have no need of Christ; and at times the weak and weary have been too ready to let Him carry them.

But does His word mean that only the sick need Christ? No; for He is vastly more than a physician. He is that, thank God; a ministering helper for all who are sick and sorry and sad and sinful. But the brave, and the well, and the strong need Him just as much; for He is not only physician, but teacher, leader, captain, inspirer. He calls us, as Peter says, "by His own glory and manliness."

"Not to the weak alone
Soundeth the call of love,
'Come unto me and rest';
But to the brave, and strong, and great,
Who bear the load, and carry the weight,
Entering into the game of life
With vigor, and joy, and zest."

O God our Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast sent Thy Son to call sinners to repentance; to call the weary and heavy laden to come and find rest in Him. But we bless Thee also that Thou callest the young and the strong, the brave and the eager, to follow Thee. May all men hear and heed that call, in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 9:35–38.

Crowds have a curious effect on us. Sometimes they rouse in us fear, sometimes repulsion; sometimes, when we live

much in the midst of the crowd, we grow indifferent, and push our careless way through them.

Jesus looked on the crowd with compassion. He thought of them all as individuals. He was interested in them, prayed for them, wanted to help them.

So should we walk amid the throng. Never should we lose the sense of the individual, or the feeling of compassion at the cares and follies and sufferings and sins of the crowd.

"Only as souls I see the folk thereunder;
Bound, who should conquer, slaves, who should be kings.
Hearing their one hope with an empty wonder;
Sadly contented with a show of things."

As we see Jesus moving thus lovingly and compassionately amid the crowd, let our hearts cry:

"O Master, let me walk with Thee,
In lowly paths of service free;
Tell me Thy secret: help me bear
The strain of toil, the fret of care."

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK, MONDAY

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He send forth labourers into his harvest." MATTHEW 9:38.

As the Master thought of the needy world, and yearned to see it made whole and happy and holy, He called on His friends to pray for the one essential for success in meeting the needs of the world. What was that? Money? Organization? Equipment? It was, and is, *labourers.*

In every field of Christian effort, at home, abroad, in all missionary work, all social service, everywhere, the one

all-important, decisive matter is *personnel.* Given the right sort of men and women, true success is certain.

More money for missions? Better equipment and organization? Yes, all that, and much more, is needed. But the one thing imperatively necessary is *men and women of the right sort.* For that let us pray.

O God in Christ, Who didst spend Thyself with such patient devotion, through those three short years, in calling and training a little band of men to do the work of Thy kingdom, call and inspire, we beseech Thee, men and women in this day, to go into all the fields of service, both to sow and to reap, and to bring into Thy garner the multitude Thou dost love, and for whom Thou didst give Thy life. In Thine own name we pray. AMEN.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK, TUESDAY

"And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." MATTHEW 10:1.

Chapter divisions in the Bible are not inspired. Sometimes they put asunder what God has joined.

So it is with this opening verse of the tenth chapter of Matthew. It follows immediately on the closing thought of the previous chapter. There Jesus had been telling His followers to pray that God would send out labourers. Here He sends *them* out, to answer their own prayer.

So God often answers our prayers. The best and surest result of earnest prayer is to lead the soul that prays to do

his best for the bringing of that for which he prays. Perhaps that is why it is the "prayer of a *righteous* man" that avails in its working. It is a clear mark of a truly righteous man that his conscience gives him no rest until he is doing his best in that cause for which he prays.

O God, put into our hearts, we pray, not only an earnest desire to know Thy will, and an eager wish that Thy will may be done; but also a humble and steadfast purpose to do Thy will to the utmost of our power; that our lives may not shame our prayers, but may be inspired and led by them.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 10:2–4.

A list of names! But there is a teaching in them which many good people of our day need, a lesson of inclusiveness.

It has been one of the saddest and most glaring of the faults of Christians that they have tended so to divide, to form exclusive groups.

Few sets of people have ever been more widely and bitterly divided than were the publicans and the zealots in Jesus' day. In a sense they were the whites and the reds, the standpatters and the radicals, the servants of the established order and the revolutionists.

And Jesus took one from each group into His little company of twelve.

What a lesson to the church! Let it identify itself exclusively with no group; neither capital nor labor; neither radical nor conservative; its mission is to be, as Phillips

Brooks said, "a solvent, above our differences, and composing them."

Lord, fill Thy church with Thy blessed spirit of love, and breadth, and inclusiveness. We know Thou wouldst have Thy church a large place, with room for all who will love their brethren, and doors that shall be shut only against those who hate or despise others. Come again to Thy Temple, O Lord of our spirits, and cleanse it of all prejudice, partisanship, and exclusiveness; that it may be a worthy dwelling for the spirit of all grace, a house of prayer for all people. AMEN.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
LUKE 10:1.

It does us good to realize the unerring wisdom of Jesus. We trust His judgment the more readily when we find Him acting wisely in small matters.

So observe that He sent out His representatives, not each by himself, but in pairs. Therein He was in tune with ordinary and universal good sense.

There is a common saying: "Two is company; three is none."

The Japanese have a similar proverb; "One is too few; three is too many."

Jesus was sure that two together could do more than two working each by himself. There is one basic principle of the Church. No Christian can live a complete Christian life alone.

O God, Who hast mercifully set us in families and in fellowships, that we might realize our true selves as we never can in solitude, grant us grace to use to the full this good and sweet gift of comradeship, that we may ever find Thee in one another, and love one another in Thee, and may enter into the joy of fellowship in service. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
LUKE 5:1–10.

Seeing the power of Christ, and, through the miracle, catching sight of the glory of the Master, Peter realized keenly his own need of salvation, his own sinfulness. Falling at the feet of Jesus, he cried out, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." No thought was in his mind but that of his own worthlessness.

But Jesus calls him to become a fisher of men. He would have the man find salvation through saving others, become worthy through seeking to make others more worthy.

It is still, and always, Christ's way. Forget yourself! Think of others! In seeking to save them, you shall find your own best and surest way of salvation.

> "Heaven's gate is closed to him that comes alone;
> Save thou a soul, and it shall save thine own."

O God of love, Who in Christ's life and death wouldst free us from selfishness, forgive us that so often that vice of self-interest finds its way into our holiest places and moments. We forget the needs of the world in our own petty

needs; we forget the souls of men in concern about our own souls.

O, lead us out from all littleness, and set our souls in a large place; where we may know the joy of forgetting self in the love of our neighbour, and of finding our true life in that loss of the self. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
LUKE 5:1–11.

"They left all, and followed Him." When? Were they out of work, hard-pressed, unsuccessful? Is not that too much our idea of the time when we need to come to Christ?

It was just when they were at the peak of success; they had made the greatest haul they had ever made. That was when they "left all, and followed Him."

What a lesson! When God sends some great blessings, when the sky is clear and the wind favourable, and all things work for our success, we should, and we will if we are real Christians, say, "Now is the time for serving God; now I can really follow Christ."

How the Kingdom of God would leap forward, if all Christians took their prosperity as a call to follow Jesus!

O God, from Whom cometh every good and perfect gift, grant that we may take every gift of Thine as a call from Thee, and may find our richest joy in the use of Thy gifts in Thy service. So may we be such followers of Christ as were the devoted men who first knew and loved Him. AMEN.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK, SUNDAY

"When they persecute you in this city, flee into the next." MATTHEW 10:23.

Jesus' wonderful combination of idealism and common sense shines out from this simple counsel.

The impractical idealist, the fanatic would say, "When they persecute you, stay where you are; fight it out; die at your post."

The hard-headed realist would say, "If they persecute you, give up. Go home."

Jesus, says, "When they persecute you in this city, flee into the *next*." That means, Don't waste your time and strength and life in contending against impossible odds. But don't give up. Go on with your program; try the next town. They may receive you there.

The workman nearest to the spirit of the Master is neither the fanatic, nor the easily discouraged. He is the one who combines idealism and common sense; who will go on, and will not be frightened from his task; but will use his good judgment to go to those places where he can hope to work to some effect.

Grant us, O God, a steadfastness of soul that cannot be shaken. Help us to see Thy work and Thy way with perfect clarity, and to take that way, whether it lead us to danger or to comfort. Set us free, we pray, from the stubbornness that would hold us hopelessly in impossible places; and from the weakness that yields in discouragement when the task becomes hard and painful. Hold us steady, we pray, in the way of Thy blessed and holy will. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK, MONDAY

Read
LUKE 10:5–11.

It is easy to think that, when we reject the truth or let it pass, we have weakened or injured or disposed of the truth. These people no doubt so judged. Some queer itinerant preachers had tried to tell them of a "Kingdom of God" that was at hand. They made short work of the fools and their folly: they showed them the door.

But the Kingdom *had* come nigh to them. The one result of their action was a loss of something they might have known and been and had.

So it is always. You reject a truth, and think you have dealt it a hard blow. But the only result is that *you* are left behind, while the truth goes marching on.

When Horace Greeley was editing the "New York Tribune," an irate man said to him one day, "Mr. Greeley, I've stopped your paper." Greeley answered, "Oh, no; you haven't, You may have ceased taking it and reading it; but the paper goes right on."

O Thou Living God, in Whom all good and true things live, grant me grace to deal honestly with all the truth Thou dost show me. May I never turn away from any word of truth or duty; but eagerly receiving it, and humbly following it, may I attain unto Thy saving truth more and more. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
LUKE 7:19–23.

Here was an honest doubter to be convinced. How does Jesus do it? What does He use for the purpose? Does He invoke authority, call on ancient documents, or argue the matter?

He tells living men: "Go and tell John the things that ye have seen." He relies on living testimony from living people. He depends on present results, not on ancient records.

Not things done long ago, but things being done now, form the true apologetic for Christianity. Doubters will be convinced or remain unconvinced, according to what the Christians they know and see are or fail to be.

A solemn thought for every Christian! What influence am I having to make believers or unbelievers?

O Spirit of God, Who of old spoke by the prophets, speak through my life Thy present message. Help me so to let my light shine that men may see my good works and glorify my Father Who is in heaven. In the name of Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
LUKE 7:18–23.

Look again at this scene. Jesus would convince an honest doubter, would confirm a wavering faith. There are sincere men and women of our acquaintance, who need to be

brought out of the shadows of doubt into the light of faith. How can it be done?

Three things Jesus depends on:

First: He tells the doubter to look for himself at the fruits, the results. So often we keep digging away at the roots. The fruit is the proof.

Second: He tells the messengers who want to convince and cheer their friend to speak to him out of their own experience. "Go and tell John the things that *ye* have seen and heard!"

Third: He calls for faith in *Himself,* that will hold through the times of doubt. No matter how dark the experience, hear Him say, "Fear not: only believe; blessed is he who shall not be offended in me."

Here is a clear chart of the way of faith.

O God, without Whom we can do nothing, open our eyes, we pray, that we may see Thy right way and not stumble therein. Increase and confirm our faith; restore unto us the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold us with a willing spirit. So may we follow our Lord and Master with unfaltering steps through the dark and narrow passes into the light of His open country. In His name. AMEN.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK, THURSDAY

Read

MATTHEW 11:16–19.

"But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil."

Jesus voiced this judgment about His own generation. But it holds for our day no less than for His, perhaps even more. For in this day when knowledge is widespread, and culture is well-nigh universal, it is easy to fall into the fault which Jesus here condemns—the fault of being a critic rather than a helper, the fault of "not playing the game."

There is a cheap and unworthy sense of superiority which comes from keeping out of life's real problems and concerns, and criticizing from the sidelines those who are doing the work. We need to pray to be delivered from such a habit of mind and life. Only he who honestly tries to play the game has the right to be a critic.

Open our eyes, O God, to the opportunities for service that are all about us. Give us clear vision of things as they are, and complete willingness to voice our judgments.

But by Thy grace defend us this day and all days from the sin of being critics rather than workers; and from holding aloof while others attempt things for Thee. Give us our part, help us to play it with zest, and to be generous in our judgments toward the mistakes and defects of others.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. AMEN.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
LUKE 7:31–35.

Jesus here points out a serious error into which certain men of His time were falling. It is an error that is still serious and prevalent—the spirit of fault finding instead of that of appreciation.

They looked at John, marking his severity and said he

was crazy. They looked at Jesus, and, marking His geniality, said He was dissipated. They blamed the two heroes for opposite faults. They ought to have praised them for their obvious virtues.

Do we never fall into the same error? It is a common fault of the American people. They criticize one public man for aggressiveness, and his successor for mildness. It is easy to be blind to the virtues of others, through alert attention to their faults—easy, cheap, and unworthy. Ask God to save us from this fault.

O God, Who art ever striving, out of the chaos of human passion, to bring a world of ordered character; grant that we may pass through this world with eyes open to all that is good, even if we sometimes fail to see what is evil. Help us to be more ready to praise the right than we are even to denounce the wrong. As we move among our fellows, keep our eyes ever open to whatsover things are honourable, and true, and righteous, and of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, may we think on these things. And this we ask, for our own sakes, for the sake of all the lives we touch, but above all for the sake of Jesus our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 11:25–30.

This chapter opens with the story of an honest doubter. It closes with a gracious invitation to come to Christ and find rest.

There are many doubters today. It is not an age when it is easy to believe. What shall we do? This at least is sure;

it is always wise to bring our doubts, and our doubting selves, to Christ. John did that, and was helped. Christ at least is sure. No one can come into real touch with Him, and not find rest, even though his doubts have not wholly cleared.

One of the clear-minded Christians of the generation just past wrote a bit of meditation and prayer that we of this critical age may well make our own:

"I have a life in Christ to live;
But, ere I live it, must I wait
Till reason can clear answer give
Of this or that book's date?
I have a life in Christ to live;
I have a death in Christ to die;
And must I wait till science give
All doubts a full reply?
Nay, rather, while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
Take but the lowest seat,
And hear thine awful voice repeat,
In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet,
'Come unto me, and rest;
Believe me, and be blest.'"

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 11:25, 26.

"At that season" Jesus gave thanks. Luke says He "rejoiced in Spirit."

When was this? What had happened? He had just upbraided the cities that had not listened to Him or to His messengers. The men of power and influence were turning away from Him. Only the simple and lowly were listening to His words and caring much about them. Very well! Thank God for that!

Out of the same mass of detail in which some souls would have seen only cause for discouragement and complaint, Jesus seized upon the facts that called for thanksgiving.

What gift could one desire more than such a spirit? And where can one find it more surely than in companionship with Christ?

O God, Whose loving-kindness is made known to us in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, help us to trust Thee with the same wholeness of heart with which He trusted, and so to be able to meet life in all its vicissitudes with a cheerful and unconquerable faith, that shall show itself in continual thankfulness; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 11:25, 26.

When the noble missionary and man of God, Howard Bliss, was lying in a hospital, but a few days before his death, I called on him. He greeted me with a radiant and buoyant manner. "What a lucky man I am," he exclaimed. "This pleasant room, and kind attendants; these lovely flowers—see them—sent by my friends; so many good friends coming to see me. I certainly ought to be one of the happiest men alive."

Is it strange that my thoughts turned at once to Jesus, Who "gave thanks," when others would have "given up"? What an example for me to follow! How it shames me, and yet inspires me!

Lord, help me to look on all of life with a brave heart and a trusting spirit. May I have "in a knowledge of Thee and of myself, coming to me daily in fresh revelations, a steadfast firmament of blue, in which all clouds soon dissolve," that so I may be a true companion of Jesus Christ my Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 11:27.

It is intensely interesting to find in the Synoptic Gospels this claim on Jesus' part of a unique significance and relationship to God. Had this verse been found as a fragment somewhere, beyond doubt all students would have classed it with the Fourth Gospel.

Does not its appearance here, as it comes breaking through the simple records of the words and deeds of the Jesus of Galilee, reveal in Him those very deeps of experience and vision that shine forth from the Gospel of John? There was more in Jesus than that which came to the surface in casual daily encounters with ordinary people. When sensitive or mystical temperaments came into touch with Him, they found deep answering unto deep, and caught words and messages and thoughts beyond those which ordinary men could understand.

Thank God for a Christ Who appeals to the deepest and highest in the human soul.

O God our Father, we bless Thee for a leader and guide Who speaks so simply that the lowliest can understand, and yet with such depth of meaning that the wisest must bow in reverence. Help us to trust His wisdom in all the events of life, and to find in Him a continual inspiration to high thought and noble action; in the name of Him Who loves us at our worst and calls us to our best. AMEN.

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 11:28–30.

No words of Jesus are more familiar than these. George Adam Smith calls them the greatest words in the Bible. They tell of that which we need most. And never did men need rest more than in these busy, rushing, restless days.

We do not always see that they tell us of two ways of rest, a simpler way, and a deeper way.

The simpler way is just to come to Christ and find rest. "Come unto me, and I will *give* you rest." It is an offer to all who are weary, all who labour and are heavy laden. There are no conditions except that we "Come." Christ is ready to give to all who will come to Him that rest which all are seeking.

That is what churches are for, what hymns are for, what sacraments are for, what prayer is for. They are all ways of coming to Christ, that we may find rest. We miss the first and most direct value of religion if we do not use it for that.

> "Calm soul of all things, make it mine
> To feel, amid the city's jar,
> That there abides a peace of Thine
> Man did not make, and cannot mar."

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 11:28–30.

There is more here than the offer of the gift of rest. After calling, "Come unto me and I will *give* you rest," the Master says, "Take my yoke and learn of me, and ye shall *find* rest unto your souls."

There is more in religion than a temporary rest; there is the possibility of a rest that will remain our possession through all the changes of life. We can find rest to our souls.

It is a wonderful privilege to have a friend who is wise say, "Come to me anytime when you need advice, and I will give you counsel." But how much more when he says, "Come and learn of me, and you shall get wisdom in your soul."

It is a blessed offer when some richly gifted musician says, "Come in when you are tired, and I will play for you." How much more if that gifted friend says, "Learn of me, and you can find the grace and solace of the art of music for yourself."

One proves the deep value of the religion of Christ only when he learns of the Master the way of this deeper and lasting rest.

O Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee. Help us to enter into Thy rest, and there to abide, safe from all that can disturb us, or harm our peace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"I am meek and lowly in heart." MATTHEW 11:29.

What does Jesus point out as the lesson we should learn of Him in order to find rest?

"I am meek and lowly in heart."

How much of our restlessness is due to our pride, conceit, and selfishness! If only we could learn to be unselfish (that is meek) and humble (that is lowly) we should be well on the way to the joy and grace of a restful spirit.

This is not to glorify the negative, vacant rest desired by the Buddhist, that comes from stripping one's self of all ties, laying the soul bare and leaving it cold. It is rather a manifestation of the spirit that discards impedimenta that it may get forward more rapidly and more easily.

O God, grant that, seeing Thy greatness revealed in the quiet and joyous goodness of the Lord Jesus, as it is not even in the glory of the heavens, I may gladly submit my spirit to the Mastership of the same Lord Jesus, that from Him I may learn the way, and acquire the grace, of a meek and lowly heart. AMEN.

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 11:28–30.

Is this the only way by which one may find "rest for the soul"?

No. That great prophet, Jeremiah, had pointed out to the people of his time another path. Jesus may well have had in mind that earlier message: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths,

where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16).

There is a kind of soul-rest which comes from sitting down content with the "old-time religion," not raising new questions, nor troubling one's self with thinking out problems. But this way of Jeremiah is not the way of Jesus. He points forward, not back. If we would find the best and truest rest, we must go on with Him to a glad acceptance of new light, and a facing of living issues, in the spirit of unselfish and unambitious adventure.

The way of Jeremiah is good. The way of Jesus is better.

O God, Who didst guide Thy people of old by a cloudy, fiery pillar, that moved on each day toward the land of promise, guide us, Thy children of this later time, by Thine own onward-moving Spirit, that we may find that better rest and deeper joy that lies far ahead, a country into which we enter more perfectly with each onward step along the way that Jesus trod. In His name. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"Have ye not read what David did?" MATTHEW 12:3.

Under these simple words lies a great principle for our guidance. Faced with a difficult question of religious procedure, Jesus made His appeal not to a law, but to a person; not to what Moses said, but to what David did. On that He rested His case.

Far sounder than a view of the Bible that exalts chiefly its specific statements is a view of the Bible as great in and through the revelation of personalities, that teaches through example even more than through precept, and finds the

authoritative revelation of God in things done even more than in words spoken. Let me so use my Bible.

O God, Who hath caused all Scripture to be written for our admonition and comfort, grant that we may ever find in it a book of life, wherein we not only hear, but see; and are guided by living voices and deeds, through which Thy Spirit speaks to us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who is the way, the truth, and the life. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK, MONDAY

"I say unto you, that one greater than the temple is here." MATTHEW 12:6.

If Jesus really said this, making Himself out to be greater than the temple, we cannot wonder that the Jews were shocked. Nor can we avoid a feeling of surprise at what so easily seems a lack of proper modesty.

But Jesus did not really say this. Look in the margin of the Revised Version if you would see what He really did say; "a greater thing than the temple is here." What was that "greater thing"? Mercy, goodness, love, human service. He goes on to specify this in the next verse, in which He quotes from the ancient book of Hosea.

Here is not any exhibition of pride or self-exaltation. Here is a clear statement of a fundamental principle of Christianity, that above all institutions and rites and sacred places and all that is outward rises "something greater"—the spirit of loving-kindness. That is a lesson we can never afford to forget.

O God, we adore Thee and praise Thee, not only in the firmament of Thy power, and in the beauty of Thy sanc-

tuary, but even more in the glory of Thy wondrous compassion, revealed in human love and service, and in the life and death of Thy Son, Our Lord. Enable us, we pray, to live and walk with Thee in that same blessed spirit of compassionate love; through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." MATTHEW 12:8.

The meaning and lesson here is different from what it would have been had the Lord said, "The Son of God is Lord of the Sabbath." Identifying Himself as He did with humanity as a whole, through use of His chosen name "Son of Man," He here laid down the great principle that human interests must always take precedence of institutional interests, yes, even of the ordinances of religion.

The Sabbath is great; but man is greater. Worship is important; but human service is more important. The Church has not always respected that judgment, but it must, if it would be in the spirit of Jesus.

O God, accept, we beseech Thee, not only the offerings of our lips, and the love of our hearts, but the service of our hands. Make us quick to minister to human need, in the name of Him Who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these least, ye have done it unto me." AMEN.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 12:9–13.

Yesterday we learned from Jesus that man is of more account than religious ordinances.

Today we learn a lesson needed at least as much—that man is of more account than property. "If your sheep gets in trouble on the Sabbath you rescue it. But you object if one saves a sick man on the holy day. Is not a man better than a sheep?"

Does not our civilization need the lesson? Human interests must always take precedence of property interests; human rights are always more vital than property rights. When nations, and the modern world, shall have taken to heart that lesson, we shall be nearer to the Kingdom of God than ever before. Jesus taught it clearly nineteen hundred years ago. Is it not time that we learned and practiced it?

O God our Father, forgive us for our sins against Thy children, our brethren. Forgive us that we so often live in comfort based on the exploitation of men and women and children. Help us by Thy grace to care more about human rights and human wrongs than about all possessions and properties. Thus may we help to bring that Kingdom for the coming of which we pray. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"But the Pharisees went out, and took counsel against Him, how they might destroy Him." MATTHEW 12:14.

They could not answer Him. They could not meet Him on the basis of right reason. Well then, they would put Him out of the way.

What wicked, foolish men! But wait, before casting stones at them.

Have you never tried to put out of sight and hearing an unpleasant truth?

Have you never shut your eyes rather than see something that might compel you to change your mind, to give up cherished ideas, to make unwelcome adjustments in your way of living?

Have you never set Christ aside, rather than meet His clear teachings?

O God, forgive us that so often we follow in the way of the wicked husbandmen, and put the messenger out of the way, instead of heeding the message. Give us, O Thou Spirit of Truth, a spirit resolved to face the truth and live by it, whatever the cost; knowing that the path of truth is the straightest way always to the knowledge of God. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, the Lover and Lord of the truth and of all who are faithful to it. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 12:15–21.

In this great passage from the Old Testament Jesus recognized His own mission. In it we should recognize our mission. It is the portrait of the *Practical Idealist.* Two traits distinguish him. The first is inflexible devotion to the ideal. He will not give up until he has brought judgment to victory. The second is infinite patience, readiness always to use the means at hand, however poor and faulty. He wants a pen to write with; but the only thing at hand is a bruised and broken bit of reed. Well, he will use that! He wants a light. Here is only a dimly burning wick. He will use that.

Such is the spirit we need. There are too many idealists who will not do anything because they cannot do everything;

who sit and wait for the perfect instrument. Jesus' greatness and success was in part due to His extreme readiness to use the means at hand, however poor.

Grant me, O God, a divine discontent with any ideal short of the best. I would be perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect. I would have my work perfect, even as the work of God is perfect.

But grant also the grace to follow Thy Son, our Lord, in patience and simplicity and readiness to use what the day brings in order to work and press on toward the better day that lies ahead. So may we be, not only in name, but in spirit and in truth, fellow labourers with Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"He that is not with me is against me." MATTHEW 12:30.

Cannot one then be neutral? No; not with regard to Jesus and that for which He stands.

Our Lord here warns us against the great sin and curse of indifference. One can no more hold himself neutral toward Christ and His way of Life, than he can hold a boat still in a stream. He must either actively push his boat against the current, or float down with the current.

So it is with the religious life. To be indifferent is to be among the opponents of Christianity. Only active loyalty can avail. For the very essence of true religion is in our active loyalty.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may

glorify Thy holy name; and finally by Thy mercy may obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 12:22–32.

There is probably no passage in the Bible that has so troubled sensitive souls as this which tells of the sin against the Holy Spirit. Men and women have racked their souls to discover whether they might not have been guilty of this sin, and so be beyond hope.

But the meaning is plain and simple. Jesus says one may array himself against any and all of the outward forms of religion, even against the One Who revealed in His person the very nature of God. But if one sets himself against the spirit of religion, calling good evil, and love hateful, and the spirit of Christ an unholy thing, he is beyond hope.

What a solemn warning to those who care more for forms than for the spirit!

Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy name; through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 12:31, 32.

A leading American educator has remarked: "If there be a sin against the Holy Ghost, it is the sin of doing anything to thwart the promise of one's own or another's youth."

Such a saying is not far from the spirit of the teaching of Jesus. He gave most solemn warnings against the sin and peril of doing anything that would harm "one of these little ones." He declared that the Kingdom of Heaven depended on the right training and growth of the children. He said, "It is not the will of your Father in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

In the light of these plain and solemn judgments, what shall be said of our child labour, our inadequate provision for education, our indifference to harmful and degrading conditions of living, and all the "social wants that sin against the strength of youth"? Must not our civilization be judged by this test? If so, what hope is there for it?

O God, Who art revealed in One Who loved the children, help us to love them, to believe in them, and to do what in us lies to make this country of ours, and this world of ours, a right and pure home, wherein they may grow to good and holy manhood and womanhood, to the glory of Thy name and the joy of Thy world. AMEN.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 12:34, 35.

Here again Jesus emphasizes that matter of *inwardness* of which He makes so much in the Sermon on the Mount. Nothing outward can possibly count for so much as can the state of the heart. For "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Speech is only the overflow of the heart.

How vital it is, if we would be truly right and good, that we should be clean inwardly, free from all trace of evil. There is nothing for which we should pray more earnestly than for this.

Lord, set a guard at the door of my imagination, that no evil, false, or unclean thing may enter or emerge, or lurk in its hidden recesses. But may it be a home for all bright spirits and pure visions, that shall freely move in and out, giving to me the delight of innocent fancies, the play of humour, the glory of creative thought, and the serene comfort of a pure heart. So may I find free and glad entrance into the goodly fellowship of those who are at home amid invisible and eternal realities. AMEN.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." MATTHEW 12:36.

Puritans and other severe folk have quoted this saying as if it were a condemnation of all light and graceful speech, of wit, humour, nonsense, and other pleasant uses of mind and tongue.

But what Jesus would here impress on us is that we are, and shall be, judged by our "idle" words, our unconscious words, those that spring up without our deliberate intention. It is what we are and say and do when we speak or act without conscious thought that really judges us. This saying of Jesus fits perfectly into His teaching in the simple and solemn passage in which He describes the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31–46). There, as here, the basis of judgment is the unconscious word or act.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. AMEN.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 12:38–40.

Here, as everywhere, Jesus discouraged the appeal to miracles as proof of His authority. He wrought His miracles in order to help men, not in order to prove that He and His messages were from God. It is a perverse spirit that seeks proof of divine truth from mysterious and inexplicable wonders.

How then can any of His followers insist on the necessity of faith in the miracles, or make them essential proofs of Christ's divine authority?

"Here is the great miracle—that that one life, in three brief years, changed the whole current of human history." Beside that mighty fact, all tales of wonder seem idle and of little account.

> "So let them query about the past,
> If this or that be true;
> I know that the glory of that one Life
> Is making our whole world new."

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 12:43–45.

Jesus is in full accord with modern psychology in stressing the value of the positive. Little good there is in cleansing the heart, if it is left empty. Something vital, dynamic, positive must make its home there, if the evil spirit is to be kept out.

"The expulsive power of a new affection" is the real saving grace.

Perhaps we have thought too much of salvation in terms of cleansing; too little in terms of transformation of motive. The true salvation comes when Christ captures the loyalty of the heart, so that "self dies out."

Lord, save me, I beseech Thee, with a great and lasting salvation. Drive out every evil thought and impulse from my heart. But, above all, fill that heart with a love for God and for my fellow men that shall claim all my soul in glad and adventurous loyalty, so that there shall be no room in my heart for anything lower. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 12:43–45.

Here is a vivid picture. A house, thoroughly cleaned and swept, after a disreputable tenant has been put out, then left standing ready for occupancy, but empty. The former occupant steals back, peers in at a window, sees that no one is there, and enters, taking with him some tramps even less respectable than himself, whom he has picked up in his homeless wanderings.

Such is Jesus' picture of the fate of a life, made clean, but left empty.

It is not enough to have one's life cleaned up, set in order, with its bad habits driven out. Some active good spirit must be given the full use and occupancy of it.

How better could our Lord teach the absolute necessity of

a positive religious experience? It is not enough to be clean, respectable; one must have some active love, faith, loyalty in charge of his soul, or he is not safe. It is not enough to be saved *from* something; he must be saved *into* something.

Set me free from all evil passions, and heal my heart of all inordinate affections; that, being inwardly cured and thoroughly cleansed, I may be made fit to love, courageous to suffer, steady to persevere. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 3:1, 2, 11, 12.

"I baptize you with water. But He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." The contrast holds today. Too many of us stop with a *water* religion, that makes us and keeps us clean, cool, respectable, inoffensive. We fail to go on to a religion of spirit and fire, that shall impart a motive, a power, a dynamic, a sense of the Divine presence with its joyous compulsion.

In the records of the missionary career of Paul, we read of his finding certain Christians who "knew only the baptism of John." He might find some today, content with correct conduct, irreproachable, but with no fire and spirit within. God and man need Christians full of fire and spirit.

Lord, make us Thy witnesses, so filled with Thy spirit and with the joy of Thy salvation that we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard. Make us pure, and keep us pure, clean from all evil, free from sins and faults. But grant us also Thy Holy Spirit, an inward fire and grace;

that we may be irrepressible in our outspeaking for Thee, one with Jesus Christ our Lord in holy and glad enthusiasm for God and for the things of God. In the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
JOHN 4:31–34.

Here is a word that fits closely into our common life. It is a practical question for every worker, How and where can I find zest, power, for my daily work?

There are many answers. Recreation helps, change of work, friendly intercourse. But there is no other way so good as this way of Jesus. His disciples had left Him worn and weary. They found Him, on their return, refreshed and vigorous. What is His explanation? "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." The *work itself* was His *meat,* that which sustained Him.

It is wisdom to choose, if one can, work in which the heart can find its great joy and satisfaction.

But even where that cannot be, there is sustaining grace that comes from looking on our work as "the will of Him that sent us." Thus to put into our toil the motive of personal loyalty lifts it up and transfigures it.

A teacher of little children once said to me: "It is so much easier to be patient and loving with all sorts of children now that I am a Christian; for when I have to deal with a hard or unpleasant child, I hear Christ say, 'Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these, ye do it unto Me.'"

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour; and further us with Thy continual help; that in all

our works, begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 12:46–50.

What is Christ's test of relationship to Him?

Not any family, or clan, or race connection. He belongs to all, not to one particular group; to Gentiles no less than to Jews; to Orientals no less than to Occidentals.

Not any profession of belief. Christian churches have been inclined to insist on this as the test. Jesus did not. He stressed the importance of belief, the necessity of clear discrimination between false and true; but He never made orthodoxy the test of relationship to Him.

This is His test always—*the doing of the will of God.* It is a matter of the life, of the attitude toward God's will, of personal loyalty shown in daily conduct.

No other test is so simple; no other is so hard to meet. And no other is acceptable to Him.

Forgive me, O Lord, for my oft-repeated presumption in offering to Thee something other than Thy divine requirement. I bring Thee words, thoughts, professions, when Thou art ever demanding that my whole life be set and kept in the way of Thy holy and loving will. Help me not only to call Thee Lord, Lord, but to do the things which Thou sayest, and in every act of my life to glorify Thee and to do Thy will. AMEN.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13.

A series of pictures of what the Kingdom is "like."

What *is* religion like? What does it deal with? What would your answer be?

See what Jesus' answer is. He says it is like many things—a man working in a field, grain growing up, a woman baking bread, a fisherman's net, a farmer struggling with weeds in his field, a pearl dealer seeking gems, a man finding treasure in a field, a housekeeper bringing out old and new treasures.

So runs the varied list. But note—all these are alike in that they have to do with life. The Kingdom of Heaven, religion, the life with God, is like our everyday living, only lived with eyes open to the glory of God.

Let my prayer today be that of Pompilia, in Browning's great story:

> "To have to do with nothing but the true,
> The good, the eternal,—and these not alone
> In the main current of the general life,
> But small experiences of every day,
> Concerns of the particular hearth and home."

Lord, let me not go far afield in search of Thee and Thine. Give me the "eyes of the glory of God," that I may see Thee in the common, and find a new glory in the things of every day, as the light of Christ Jesus Thy Son falls upon them. AMEN.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"Behold a sower went forth to sow." MATTHEW 13:3.

What an obvious remark! Why should a sower go forth except to sow?

Yet how often those whom God sends out to sow are overeager for the harvest, and long to reap. They are not content to sow continually.

It is hard to go on month after month, sowing the seed, teaching, preaching, training the children in the home, carrying on this or that phase of religious work, without giving much thought to the results that can be seen. The churches and boards at home demand statistics from the workers abroad. Some of the best missionaries declare that the work would profit if there could be a "ten year moratorium on statistics."

How steadily Jesus sowed during those few precious months of His active work! The harvest is still coming in. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

> "And twice a thousand years of grief,
> Of sorrow, and of sin,
> May prove how large a harvest sheaf
> His patient love may win."

"In the morning sow thy seed; and in the evening withhold not thy hand. For thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that; or whether both alike shall be good."

O God, give me good seed to sow, right thoughts, quickening words, kindly acts. Grant me strength and grace to

continue sowing with steadfastness and patience, rejoicing at any signs of growth, but content to leave the harvest to Thee to be reaped in Thine own good time. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"Some seeds fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them." MATTHEW 13:4.

How is it that we go on week after week, year after year, hearing sermons and lectures, attending worship and study classes, reading books and papers, good seed falling into our hearts and lives in a continual shower, and yet produce so little fruit from all the seed?

In this parable Jesus shows us some of the reasons.

One of them is in the fact that our lives grow surface hardened.

Through the fields run paths where many pass. The ground is trodden hard. It is good soil, as good as that around it where the grain grows well. But, worn smooth and hard where many feet have trodden, it does not let the seed in. The good seed lies on the surface, and cannot enter.

So our hearts and lives are worn smooth and trodden hard by the things and people continually passing by until the good seed which God is constantly sowing, instead of entering and taking root, lies for a moment and is snatched or blown away. We need to "break up our fallow ground."

Our Father in Heaven, Who knowest our needs far better than we do, we thank Thee for the ministry of pain and disappointment and the many experiences that break the easy

and pleasant current of our life. We dread them and shrink from them; yet are they messengers of Thy loving kindness, awakening us from indolence and contentment with present ways and thoughts to clearer thinking and deeper feeling. Send what Thou wilt, O God of love, to lead us to Thy righteousness and peace. In the name of Thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:5, 6.

Here we find another reason why the good seed falling upon our minds and souls so profusely fails to bring results.

Some soil that looks good is shallow; a shell of rock lies a little way below the surface. Seed falling there springs up quickly, but withers just as quickly. There is "no depth."

There are souls like that. Enthusiasts, they respond with a thrill to every influence. But their zeal quickly dies down; and no real result comes.

Americans are prone to this fault. We flame up over an ideal; but we lose our enthusiasm when the hard facts present themselves. We revel in the view from the mountain top; but we weary in the jungle of detail. We are the first to propose a League of Nations, and the last to enter it.

If your soul is shallow, welcome any act of God, however trying, that tends to break through the rock below, and to give a chance for roots to grow firm.

O God, let me not be weary in well doing. I would be quick and keen to respond to every impulse of Thy Spirit; but I would also be steady and persevering in the assimilation

of Thy grace. Defend me, O Lord, against my own tendency to lose interest and to grow faint-hearted in Thy service. Renew my love and loyalty and confidence day by day; for we know that in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. AMEN.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"Some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up and choked them." MATTHEW 13:7.

Some people fail to bring to fruition the good influences that fall upon them, because their lives are filled and their attention and strength taken by outward and unimportant things. Jesus compares them to ground naturally good which yet yields little or no harvest because thorns and weeds spring up and exhaust the soil.

Modern life abounds with such soil. "The world is so full of a number of things" that our attention is distracted and our strength drained; and the words of Jesus, the spirit of the Master, the high and holy influences that play upon us continually, cannot bring forth much fruit in us. The ground must be cleared of the roots and seeds of thorns and weeds, if our lives are ever to bear good harvests. Cluttered lives offer little opportunity to the Spirit of God.

Lord, set me free from all evil passions, and heal my heart of all inordinate affections; that, being inwardly cured and thoroughly cleansed, I may be made fit to love, courageous to suffer, steady to persevere. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK, MONDAY

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." MATTHEW 13:22.

It is easy for those who have little wealth, who live plainly and work hard, to dismiss this verse as a warning needed only by the rich and well-to-do. "What have we to do," they ask, "with 'the deceitfulness of riches'?"

Yes; but what about "the cares of this world"? Do not these spring up and choke the word among the poor, the hard working, even more than among those whose lives are easy?

Worry over expenses, anxious forethought, overburdened days, these form a large part of the "cares" of men and women. There are vast numbers of people on whom the good seed falls with little or no chance of finding entrance and bearing fruit, because every moment and every thought is occupied with anxious care.

It is part of the work of Christians to help bring a world order in which dull poverty shall find no place, where lives shall be free to heed and respond to the good influences of the Spirit of God as they cannot now. It is the duty of every one to find in some way a freedom from worry that shall fit the soul to receive the gracious influences of God's Word and Spirit.

Most gracious Lord, often Thou dost knock at the door, and we are so deafened by the noise about us that we do not hear, so distracted by our cares that we do not heed. Set free our hearts, O Lord, from care and anxiety, that we

may hear Thy call, and open the door, and be blest in Thy holy and loving presence. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"Others fell upon the good ground." MATTHEW 13:8.

After all, it is the soil that makes the difference. Important as it is to have good seed, the best seed is wasted if sown on poor ground.

Any human heart can become good ground. It is not always an easy process to make a life into fruitful soil. Some need harrowing experiences, some need upheavals to shatter the rock, some need drastic purifying; all need cultivation and preparation, if the good seed of God's word and God's grace is to find lodgment and bring good results.

It is one of our clearest duties to see that our hearts and lives are ready to receive and respond to God's good seed. The effect of a book, a sermon, a service of worship, depends largely on our receptiveness. God can do "exceeding abundantly," but only "according to the power that worketh *in us.*"

O Spirit of God, open my heart, and keep it open, to the influence of Thy grace. Help me this day to be so ready, so receptive, so free from distraction, that all the good that comes my way or that falls upon my mind and heart may find full entrance and so bear abundant harvest; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:8.

There are variations in the fruitfulness of good soil. Some soils produce far more than others. The farmer must not be discouraged if all his land does not bear the maximum crop.

It is easy to expect too much of people whom we try to influence for God and goodness. It is easy for a teacher, a parent, a Christian worker, to be interested only, or chiefly, in the bright and promising children, forgetting that, on the whole, the fruit of the earth comes from fields that fall below the hundredfold yield. After the best of care is taken to choose good seed, and to prepare the ground, there are differences in the result. Learn to thank God for any result. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God giveth the increase."

Teach me Thy patience, O Lord. Help me, while looking and praying for great results to come from my own labour and from that of all Thy workers, to bless Thee for any fruit that may appear; and to count the least result ample reward for all the toil and thought that I may give to Thy service. So may I be a true comrade of the Lord Jesus, Who gave thanks for the least of Thy mercies, and counted it richly worth while if in one soul new life sprang up from His loving service. In His name I pray. AMEN.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:23, 31–32.

Read also
JOHN 12:24; 15:5.

Jesus expects His followers to bear fruit, "much fruit." He uses the figure of the sown wheat and its harvest to show the law of His kingdom's growth.

Hear a parable from our own time. In the year 1903 some one discovered a new kind of wheat, and named it "Marquis Wheat." In 1904, "the whole output could have been held in a small envelope." In 1918 there was reaped in Canada and the United States a harvest of over three million bushels of that Marquis Wheat.

If you and I gave our lives for God and man as Jesus did, what harvests the Great Husbandman would gather! The tragedy is that there are so many *fruitless* lives.

O God, Thou alone canst give the increase. Yet Thou canst give the increase only when the good seed is willing to lose itself that the harvest may come. Grant, O Lord, to me, Thine unworthy servant, a spirit of humble and eager willingness to let my life be spent wholly for Thee; that so from the sacrifice of my life may spring an abundant harvest; to the honour of Thy name, and to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:24–30.

One of the difficulties we meet in all attempts to do good, and to sow good seed, is that all around are evil forces and

influences that sow bad seed along with the good. Periodicals and books that aim at lifting souls to higher levels of living must make way against a flood of cheap and debasing literature. Worship and Bible study must struggle against the downward pull of alluring and enervating influences. Inspiring music and drama are drowned out by coarse and strident noise, and by plays and movies of low order. True teaching competes with false and dangerous doctrine.

It is easy to lose heart; or to try with fanatical zeal to repress the bad and cheap influences through restrictive measures.

Our Lord counsels a better way. Have patience! Let the good seed and the bad grow together. The harvest will show.

Strange how the intolerant men, the inquisitors, the fanatics, have overlooked this great parable with its emphasis on tolerance, on patience, on the spirit that trusts in the ultimate triumph of goodness, and is willing to wait for the outworking of the long processes of God. Even in these broad-minded, tolerant days, we need the lesson.

"Teach me Thy patience; still with Thee
In closer, dearer company,
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong,
In trust that triumphs over wrong;

In hope that sends a shining ray
Far down the future's broadening way,
In peace that only Thou canst give,
With Thee, O Master, let me live."

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:31, 32.

So many of the words of our Lord come with cheer and encouragement. He knew what we would need.

It is easy to look upon the "Kingdom of God," the church, the forces and agencies of good in the world, and be discouraged and depressed at their smallness and weakness in comparison with the mass and power of evil with which they must cope.

Then let us remember that good is like a seed. It may be tiny. But the potency of growth is in it—life, that enables the tender plant to lift the paving stone; life, that spreads to more and more. Look back, and see how that which was in the soul of Jesus has grown and spread through the world. Look forward, and know that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

However tiny the seed of good, get it into the ground, care for it, give it a chance, and it will grow into something great and wonderful.

Create in me, O God, a heart serenely confident in Thee, the Lord of life and of growth. Help me never to doubt the final victory of Thy truth, the final harvest of Thy good seed, the final consummation of Thy holy and loving will for Thy children. Give me grace to serve Thee with all my heart and mind and strength, knowing that my labour is not in vain in the Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven." MATTHEW 13:33.

Never was a richer or truer comparison made. The religion of Christ is indeed like yeast. It is a ferment. It stirs things up. It changes. It disturbs. But it raises life; it lightens it, and makes it more pleasant and nutritious.

Like the leaven, it works silently, by contact of one bit with another. One life touches another and transforms it. That life touches and transforms a third. So the influence spreads.

Usually in the Bible, leaven stands for evil. Here Jesus uses it as a type of God's own Kingdom, God's own working. It is not only disease that is contagious. Health, goodness, Christianity, if they are real, are caught, passed from one life to another. So the Kingdom spreads.

Said Nelson, in one of his great sea fights, "No English Captain will make a mistake if he lays his ship alongside an enemy's ship." No Christian will make a mistake if he lays his life alongside another life, that the contagion of God's grace may get to work in that other life.

Every day, O God, Thou dost send me among Thy children and bring me into close contact with them at every turn. Help me, I pray, that I may move among men as a quickening influence for good and for godliness, not alone through my conscious words and deeds, but even more through Thy Spirit dwelling in me, and working through my outward life. So may I glorify Thy name, and help to bring Thy blessed Kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK, MONDAY

"All these things spake Jesus in parables; and without a parable spake He nothing to them." MATTHEW 13:34.

Had all the preachers and teachers and companions of Jesus been wise enough to follow Him in this method, Christianity might have had far greater influence by now. We are so insistent on exact statement, on doctrine, on mechanical precision. He told stories. He gave an exquisite illustration, and left each soul free to interpret in its own terms.

When the church shall be content to take that way, the great days of the Christian religion will dawn. For the true business of religion is not to set the soul in a precise mould or groove, but to free it to fly in the bright, fresh air of God's glorious truth.

O God our Father, may we so trust the wisdom of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Leader, that we may feel safest, not when we are shut within the narrow bounds of some precise statement, but rather when we are set free to roam in the wonder of God's far-ranging universe of truth and fancy; knowing well that Thy truth is so vast and so rich that our little minds can never grasp it all, but must reach out beyond our logic and reason into the infinite. Set us free, O God! Set us free! In the name of Jesus Christ, Who calls us unto all the truth. AMEN.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:36–43.

How weary Jesus must have been of the literal-mindedness and tiresome smallness of the disciples. He would tell one

of His marvellous parables, matchless in its simplicity, intended to provoke them to thought and fancy and interpretation, challenging them to see what lay beyond the possibility of precise statement; and then they would call for an explanation!

Patiently He would interpret, never vexed at their childish, sluggish minds, ever gracious. Yet always He would end with that challenge, "He that hath ears, let him hear," as if urging them, when next they heard a parable, to take it in and live with it, until the meaning came to them in all its richness, defying precise limits.

Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, for Thy patience with our dullness, our crass stupidity, our continual insistence on precise definition of Thy gifts to our imagination. Open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of Thy word; and help us to glory in Thy parables, in the changing colours and forms which they assume as life expands; so may we enter more and more into the realm of things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. AMEN.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"He that hath ears, let him hear." MATTHEW 13:43.

William Lyon Phelps has told us how he used to listen to classical music, and wish he could enjoy it as others seemed to do. He resolved to try; and he came to the assured conviction that anyone can enjoy the best music if he has an ear to hear with, and patience to give attention.

When Jesus has brought us His most profound teachings, He cries, "He that hath ears, let him hear." It is as if He would say, "Do not turn away, saying, This is not for me.

It *is* for you, if you will take it. Nothing in my Gospel is 'too high and good for human nature's daily food.' "

Anyone who can hear, can receive the teaching of the Lord.

Keep me, O God, by Thy grace from closing my heart to Thy messages, or from turning away, and thus judging myself unworthy of eternal life. Help me ever to meet Thy teachings with eagerness, knowing that all Thy truth is for me and for every one. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:44.

Life is rich in possibility. We go on our way, and come upon unsuspected treasure. The tragic fact is that so often we do not, when thus we light upon something fine and good, do anything, pay any price, make any sacrifice, that we may gain this good for ourselves.

If we could go back over our past life, we would stand amazed and ashamed as we realized the profusion of opportunities for culture, for advancement, for growth in the grace of God, which we came upon in the course of our living, but left unclaimed and unused because we failed to see them, or would not pay the price to make them our own.

There are treasures hid in all the fields through which we pass. How rich our lives would be, if we were wise enough to take them.

O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy; that, Thou being our Ruler

and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we miss not the things eternal. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:45, 46.

It is true that, like the man in the story last studied, we stumble upon much that is rich and rare. But on the whole those who gain the best things, follow the method of this man. He found the pearl of great price, because he made it his business to seek goodly pearls. Thus he was by choice in the way of finding pearls. Moreover, he had learned to know a goodly pearl when he saw it.

It is thus that the richest treasures of life come to us—not by accident, but along the line of our patient searching. It is the man of patient research who lights upon some great discovery in science. It is the man who is always seeking God who comes upon fresh and wonderful revelations of His nature and will. Always he who seeks is surest to find more than he seeks.

Set my feet on right paths, O Lord of my life. Incline my heart to desire the best, and to be content with nothing less. Grant me courage to dare and to sacrifice, if thereby I may win Thy true riches. Thus guide me through life along paths that lead ever through the good to the best, until I come to Thine eternal perfection. AMEN.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:51, 52.

No leader of men ever made more generous use of plain untutored men than Jesus. But here He emphasizes the superior usefulness of the educated, the man who understands, who has been instructed.

One may be a Christian, and a useful one, even though he be ignorant. If he loves God, and trusts in Christ, he has the root of the matter in him. But the Christian who becomes in truth a *disciple,* who learns more of Christ and of the things of Christ every day, is a better Christian and a more useful one. It is one of the glories of Christianity that it incites one to openmindedness, and continually calls, "Fear not; only believe! See, and do not be afraid." It is glorious to trust in and follow a leader who urges us to know all we can.

Lord, teach us to pray; and teach us to live. Help us to grow every day in knowledge of Thy truth and of Thyself; that so we may be more useful in Thy service, and may daily increase in knowledge and wisdom, as did Jesus our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTIETH WEEK, SUNDAY

"Who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."
MATTHEW 13:52.

In these simple words Jesus gives just the message our age needs. All through the church there has resounded, and still resounds, the clash of strife between traditionalists and mod-

ernists. The one cherishes the old, and has no use for the new. The other eagerly seizes on the new, and has a contempt for the old.

Jesus says that the truly instructed Christian, the truly useful Christian, will have in his treasury things new and old, and will bring them forth with equal zest. His interest in the new will not lead him to ignore the beauty and truth that is in the old. His love for the old will not blind his eyes to the beauty of the new.

That is the sort of Christian, the kind of disciple, the world of our day needs.

"I will hold
With newer light my reverence for the old,
And calmly wait the births of Providence.
Truth has charmed life; the inward word survives.
Still holy lives
Reveal the Christ of Whom the letter told,
And the new Gospel verifies the old."

O Thou Who art, and wast, and art to come, keep us, we beseech Thee, from contentment with the truth of the past, or with the new truth coming to light in our own day. Help us to take it all as our heritage, and to look eagerly for that new light which shall break forth from Thy holy word, and from Thy wonderful world in days to come. And this we ask in the name of Thy Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whose light we see light. AMEN.

THIRTIETH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 13:54–58.

These people of Jesus' own town thought slightingly of Him. They heard His words of wisdom; they saw His deeds of mercy; but they were offended. Why? Because they were so accustomed to Him. Familiarity bred contempt.

Here is a parable for our own country and its people. "God's country," we love to call it; "a Christian country." Yet the very fact that Christ is there so well known, that churches are found everywhere, and each day brings renewed reminders of Him, may dull our sense of His greatness and glory.

What a wonder it would be if in some way our knowledge of Him might be erased from our minds, and then break upon us with the vivid power of a new revelation! How we would wonder and adore!

That joy we may have, if we come to the old story with attentive minds and open hearts. For

> "Warm, sweet, tender, even yet
> A present help is He;
> And faith has still its Olivet,
> And love its Galilee."

O Thou Son of God, Who didst take for Thy chosen means of remembrance the common food and drink of every day, may Thy presence with us in all the familiar acts and ways of our life not blind us to Thy greatness and glory, but rather incline us the more to worship Thee, Who makest the radiance of God shine out through the common. AMEN.

THIRTIETH WEEK, TUESDAY

"He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."
MATTHEW 13:58.

If miracles were what some have thought them to have been—proofs of divine power, done to convince the unbelieving, then the fact that these people manifested unbelief would have led Him the more to the doing of His mighty works, that they might be convinced.

But Jesus did not use the miraculous as evidence to convince the unbelieving. He used it to confirm men in their faith, or to help them in their life. He relied on the truth of His message, and the perfection of His living, to convince men that He came from God.

Such should be our attitude toward the miracles, and our use of them. We should not attempt to lead men to believe on Christ by telling them of His Virgin Birth or of His mighty deeds. Rather will they come to believe in these because they first have believed on Him on other grounds, even the matchless truth of His message, and the eternal beauty of His character and life. What Peter said long ago is still true, that Christ "calls us by His own glory and virtue."

Lord, help us to love Thee for Thyself, not for any wonders Thou hast wrought; to find in Thy goodness a greater glory than in Thy might, and in Thy love a stronger appeal than in Thy majesty. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

THIRTIETH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"They went and told Jesus." MATTHEW 14:12.

They were shocked and grieved. Their leader had been cruelly and treacherously murdered. What could they do? Instinctively they thought of Jesus. He would understand. It would be a comfort to tell him. So they brought their sad tale and their sorrowing hearts to Him.

What a blessing it was that they knew Him! They were not yet His disciples; but their great friend and leader had said much about Jesus; and now in their hour of sorrow and need those words came back to mind, and led them to the One Who could help.

O father, mother, teacher, friend, keep on telling those you love about Jesus. They may not seem to give much heed. But perhaps at some later day, when they need comfort and strength, they will remember your words, and will go to Jesus in their hour of trial.

O Lord, by Thy good Spirit keep us faithful, in season and out of season, to what we know of Thee and of Thy grace; that so we may bring others to a saving knowledge of Thee, that shall help them to find in Thee their refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTIETH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 14:13–21.

"Give ye them to eat."

No wonder that command staggered the disciples and led to protest. How could they feed that multitude? They

looked at their slender resources and were disheartened.

But Jesus put heart into them. He blessed what they had, and somehow, put to use, it met the need.

This miracle is a parable that comes constantly to encourage us. We face a world desperately needing salvation of every sort; we look at our inadequate resources, and despair. But Jesus says, "Go on; use what you have." And when we heed His call, and go on in faith, somehow the need is wonderfully met.

Still is faith the victory that overcomes the world.

"Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or faithless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee."

THIRTIETH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 14:22, 23.

It is not easy to face the crowd, and keep one's serenity and poise in the presence of the multitude. Jesus knew how to do it, and His example teaches us. He felt that He could stand before the crowd more securely, resist their pressure, uphold His ideals, and make the throng respect them more readily, if He could be alone, and could pray. Therefore He sent away His friends, faced the crowd alone, and prayed alone. So He conquered.

"It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion. It is easy in solitude to live after one's own. But the great

man is he who in the midst of the crowd preserves with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

"Teach us to look, in all our ends,
On Thee for Judge, and not our friends;
That we, with Thee, may walk uncowed
By fear or favor of the crowd."

THIRTIETH WEEK, SATURDAY

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt." MATTHEW 14:22–33.

It is easy to take these words as meaning that if Peter had had sufficient faith, he could have walked on the water, without sinking.

But another interpretation is possible, which touches our own lives more intimately. The word may have been a gentle rebuke for the unbelief that led Peter to demand a miracle before he would believe Jesus. "Lord, *if it be Thou,* bid me come unto Thee upon the waters," he had cried; as if he could believe the more readily, if Jesus would work some marvel.

Faith so founded Jesus always deprecated. "Why did you so doubt that you demanded a miracle?" He asks. "Why was not my presence enough?"

"And not for signs in heaven above,
Or earth beneath they look,
Who know, with John, His smile of love,
With Peter—His rebuke.

In joy of inward peace, or sense
Of sorrow over sin
He is His own best evidence,
His witness is within."

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 15:1–9.

"Why do ye transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

Tradition is a wonderful blessing. By it the treasures of the past are handed on for the guidance of later generations. Our lives would indeed be poor, were it not that

> "On this bowed head the awful Past
> Once laid its consecrating hands."

But there is, as Jesus clearly saw, a danger in tradition. It grows in influence until it becomes authoritative, and usurps the place which belongs only to the living word of the Living God.

We owe much to Augustine, to Calvin, to Anselm, to other great teachers. But when their precious tradition takes precedence over the commandment of the Lord, when in devotion to their teaching we forget the great commandment to love one another, and denounce "with a zeal He will not own" those who do not follow exactly with them, we subject ourselves to the penetrating judgment of our Lord: "Why do ye transgress my commandment because of your tradition?"

O God, Who hast taught us to keep all Thy heavenly commandments by loving Thee and our neighbour, grant us the spirit of peace and grace, that Thy universal family may be devoted to Thee with their whole heart, and united to each other with a perfect charity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 15:10, 11, 15–20.

Here again comes to light that principle of "inwardness," which Matthew Arnold rightly judged one of the clearest and surest marks of the teaching of Jesus. He was not unmindful of the value of outward acts of worship, of form and ritual. But He always saw and taught the immeasurably higher value of what lay within. Defilement of the worst sort comes not from the outside, but from the inside. Clean hands mean something, but a pure heart means more.

There is no lesson we need more than the great truth that what makes the main difference is what we are inwardly, down below all forms and manners and dress and custom. He only is safe who is ever conscious of the divine presence deep within, so that he lives his life, in that hidden, secret part, "by the strength and under the eyes of God."

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. For Thy name's sake. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 15:12, 13.

The disciples were concerned and worried because the ecclesiastical leaders did not approve what Jesus was saying. But He was sublimely confident in His message, and quite

unworried over their attitude. It is easy to see that His unconcern over their disapproval, and complete confidence in the lasting value of His teaching, were not due to any fanatical or presumptuous trust in His own ideas. He knew that He desired only the truth, and that the truth would have the future with it.

He whose soul is clear from prejudice, free from bias, and ready to take the truth as his own whatever it be, need not worry about the opinions and judgments of men. He knows that ultimately the truth will prevail; and he is on the side of the truth.

O God, spread abroad in Thy church, we beseech Thee, the spirit of unflinching devotion to truth, the love of it for its own sake; that Thy people may not linger amid half lights, or in the shadow of doubtful teachings, but may live in Thy light and walk in Thy ways. And to that end, enable me, and all Thy people, to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, never fearing to follow Thy light wherever it may lead, and never hesitating to move on from any cherished abiding place into larger and more perfect realization of Thy truth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 15:21–28.

"O woman, great is thy faith."

This is one of the few instances where Jesus spoke of some one's faith as great.

What marks great faith as He estimated it? Was this woman an orthodox believer? All the evidence points the

other way. She was a "heathen," not an Israelite. In what then did her "great" faith consist? First of all, in the simple fact that she came to Jesus for help, and would not be easily turned away. Her faith showed itself in a spirit that would not be denied.

It was shown moreover in her readiness to turn discouragement into encouragement. The very words Jesus spoke about the children and the dogs, which might have daunted a less courageous spirit, she seized and turned about and made into an argument to support her appeal.

No wonder He was impressed with her faith. Such faith, which will *not* give up, and which snatches victory from apparent defeat, He still honours and counts great and worthy.

Lord, increase our faith. Give us that high courage, that spirit of brave adventure, that will not be denied, but will go on, whatever comes; and help us to be very sure in our hearts that such faith is a potent weapon wherewith Thou canst win victories for Thy Kingdom. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:1–4.

It was natural in the days of Jesus to think that anyone who came with a divine message about God and life must be authenticated by some miraculous sign.

See how Jesus met it. He makes two replies. One of them is enough for our thought today: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." That is, it is an indication that something is wrong when one demands a miracle. He is either "evil"—insincerely voicing an impossible de-

mand in order to cloak his unwillingness to obey the will of God; or "adulterous"—not satisfied with the simplicity of truth, hankering after something more exciting than quiet, homely satisfaction with the plain truth.

It is a solemn and searching experience to note thus Jesus' attitude towards the demand for the spectacular and unusual.

Set me free, O Lord, from the subtle selfishness that demands or desires that the God of all men and of all life shall favour me with special revelations. Give me a heart simple toward Thee and Thy truth, content with that rich revelation of Thyself that comes to all men through common things. And this I ask in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:1–4.

A second answer Jesus gave to these men who, with an air of pious expectancy, asked Him for a sign.

He says, "You can tell from the sky what the weather is likely to be. But you cannot read the facts of the times in which you live."

He sends them from magic to fact, from credulity to knowledge, from trust in the unusual to confidence in the steady processes of God's world.

Is it any wonder that modern science, with its trust in order and law and the significance of the ordinary, with its distrust in the occult and magical, with its unwillingness to take refuge in the mysterious, has grown only where Christ has been? What a clear call to the Christian to open his mind and heart fearlessly to all truth, confident that the more he knows of truth the better he shall know God.

We give thanks to Thee, O God, that into our confused and foolish life, where men have groped in dark places, and delved into unwholesome depths, and dredged through dirty seas, in search of Thee, has come Thy light, Thy grace, Thy clear-shining wisdom which is in Jesus Christ. Help us to glory in the simplicity which is in Him. May we never be afraid to open our eyes in the presence of facts, nor ashamed to close our eyes in the presence of God. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:5–12.

"Beware of leaven."

A very little leaven can affect a great deal of dough, as Jesus pointed out in one of His parables. We too easily neglect to guard ourselves against bits of evil thought, hints of impure fancy, traces of falsehood, shades of insincerity, that can work with the subtlety and rapidity of yeast.

Watch the beginnings! Especially should religious folk watch lest any of the "leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees" get to work in their souls, thoughts, and lives. The Scribes felt that one who was "letter perfect" was right; the Pharisees felt that one who showed to the world a flawless veneer was right. Jesus taught that one was right only when his spirit was right. "Inwardness" alone could justify his claim to be truly religious.

Beware of the leaven of the traditionalist and the formalist!

O God of all pure hearts and true souls, keep me clean, I pray, from all taint of hypocrisy or formalism in my life, work, and worship. Feed me with the unleavened bread of

sincerity and truth. Lead me in Thy Truth and teach me. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MARK 8:11–15.

Jesus often warned His followers against the Pharisees, their ostentatious piety, their narrow-minded orthodoxy, their fanatical devotion to small ends and little truths.

But here He adds a warning equally strong against the danger of being like Herod. Herod was at the opposite pole from the Pharisees. He had no use for religion; he was a "secularist," as we say. He never made long prayers in public, to be seen of men; for he never prayed at all!

Jesus says, Do not go to either extreme. Are there not men and women today who, in their reaction against overdone piety, leave religion out of their lives; in their contempt for narrow-minded belief become unbelievers? Reacting from Puritanism they give up all definite standards of moral conduct.

Jesus' warning comes to all such: "Beware of the Pharisees, *and of Herod*." Avoid both extremes. Be neither a fanatic nor a worldling, but an honest man of God.

Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the manifold changes of this life, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:13, 14.

How our unpremeditated thoughts and judgments reveal what is really in our hearts!

What were men saying about Jesus? They must form some judgment about Him. He was too outstanding, too significant, to be ignored.

So they said that He must be one of the great men of the past, come back in a new incarnation.

Why that judgment?

Because they thought that "all virtue was the past's." They looked *back* for inspiration, for greatness, for the revelation of God's will. They could not believe that anyone, or anything, great could come in their own time.

The greatest of all men of God stood in their midst, and still their eyes turned to the past!

Do we never ignore the Christ of today by turning our minds back towards the dim and distant past?

"No fable old, nor mythic lore,
No dream of bards or seers,
No dead fact stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years;

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He;
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

O Lord and Master of us all,
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine."

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:13–15.

"Who do men say that I am?" "Who say ye that I am?"

It is the second question that counts. The first one may answer easily, even glibly. We can say readily enough what men think about Jesus.

But the crucial question for each of us is, "What do *you* think about Jesus?" Whatever others may say or think, what do *you* say?

Middleton Murry knew what men said about Christ. But when he faced the question of his own estimate of that Life, he poured out his heart in the strangely powerful book, "Jesus, Man of Genius."

Find what one really thinks of Jesus, and you find the heart of his religion.

Who do *I* say that He is?

O God, Creator of all, Thou hast sent into the life of mankind a host of good and godly men and women. For each of them we give Thee thanks. But above all we bless Thee that there stands One in our midst Who challenges us as no other does, and calls us to new visions of God, of goodness, of joy, and of love. Help us with glad and whole obedience to follow Him, even Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:13–16.

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Over against the backward-turning thoughts of the people stands this saying, revealing that to this one man Jesus was of the present, not of the past. "The Living God." That was the glorious name that shone out of, and through, the old revelation that had come through prophet and Psalmist. The religion of Christ is a faith in the Living God, the God of today, the God Who "ever lives and loves," The God of life and growth, of development and evolution, the God Who does not stand still, but is ever "marching on."

Here is one glory of Jesus above the glory of all other leaders of the religious life of man—He is always of the present and of the future, not alone of the past. He is one with the Living God, Whose "one increasing purpose" runs through the ages, ever new, ever living.

Come to me this day, O God, in fresh revelations of beauty and truth and goodness. Open my eyes, that I may see Thee everywhere, life of all things, joy of all true hearts, leading on through the present into the future, from glory to glory, ever opening new doors into riches of experience as yet unknown. And give me grace to follow Thee, without fear and with great joy. AMEN.

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:17, 18.

Here was a man whom Jesus called blessed; a man of the sort He needed for the building of His Church. Why this estimate? Because the man had *found a great truth for himself.* "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father in heaven." No man had taught it to him. He had not been drilled in it in some church, or theological school. He had not found it in a creed, or in a book. It had come to his soul straight from God.

That is the sort of experience on which Christ can build, the sort He seeks. We thank God for all the truth taught us by wise and good men; for all the treasures of the past. But we truly find the joy of a real life with God only when some truth becomes *our own,* so that God speaks to our souls in and through it. Then true religion comes to light in our lives.

"Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb; let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm."

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:15–19.

"On this rock," said the Master, "I will build my church." What rock did He have in mind?

"Peter, chief of the apostles, first Pope, transmitter of a special grace essential to the real church," says the Catholic, building on that bit of rock called Peter a vast pretentious edifice of ecclesiasticism. "No," says the Protestant, "the rock is the Confession of Faith in Christ as the Son of God," and so he builds on that rock an imposing structure of creed.

But here, as everywhere, simplicity is the surest guide to the real meaning of our Lord. He takes Peter as the type of every true Christian. We interpret and apply this text best, when we see Christ point to one and another, and say, "You are Peter, John, Mary, George, Kate; on *you* I will build my church."

The church can be truly built only as Christ can find men and women who will stand alone, and own their faith in Him. Wherever there is one such Christian, there is a part of the true church.

O God, Who hast revealed Thyself in Christ Jesus our Lord, Thou hast promised in His name and in His word to be in the midst wherever two or three are gathered together in His name. Fulfil that blessed promise to us continually, O Lord. Yea, make us sure of Thy gracious presence even when we are alone; for Thou dwellest with every one that is of a humble and contrite heart. AMEN.

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:13–20.

Look once again at this scene. What kind of man is this on whom Jesus says He will build His Church? He is a man who not only has a real faith, but *is willing to confess it.*

The idea is prevalent today that all that is needed is to have a faith in one's heart. Indeed it sometimes seems as if men prided themselves on not speaking out about their faith. We hear the story quoted with approval about the man who, when asked if he had any religion, answered, "none to speak of."

But the true cause of Jesus gets forward when one *has* a religion to speak of, and is not afraid to speak. Christ wants witnesses; and silent witnesses do not help the cause as they should.

"Say not, 'the days are evil; who's to blame?'
And fold the hands, and acquiesce; for shame!
Stand up! Speak out, and bravely, in God's name!
Be Strong!"

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:20–23.

More light comes from this passage on the kind of person on whom Christ can build His Church.

Peter had a faith of his own; he was ready to confess it. So far, so good. He was the sort of building material Christ needed.

But—when sacrifice was called for, he protested.

And Jesus turned from high praise to severe censure. No more was he a man of God; rather might he be called "Satan." No longer a building block, but a stumbling block.

Let a man have never so fine a creed, and confess it with unction; if he will not live by it, sacrifice for it, give himself to the Christ he believes in, he is like a corner stone lying

in the way, so that men who would come near to God trip over it and fall.

What am I, a corner stone of God's Church, or a stumbling block? It depends on my sacrificial readiness to follow.

"Through good report and evil, Lord,
Still guided by Thy faithful word,
Our staff, our buckler, and our sword,
We follow Thee.

O Master, point Thou out the way,
Nor suffer Thou our steps to stray;
Then in the path that leads to day
We follow Thee."

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 26:20–22.

The success of the Church of Christ depends absolutely on His finding men and women who will follow Him as if they and He were alone in the world, who will act as if the success of Christ's cause in the world depended wholly on their loyalty.

The Moderator of the Church of Christ in China, when asked to choose a motto for its five-year evangelistic campaign, selected this: "Revive Thy Church, O Lord, *Beginning with Me.*"

When that spirit of individual self-searching becomes prevalent in the church, when every Christian looks into the face of Christ and asks, "Lord, is it I?" then will come the great days of Christianity for which the world has waited long; and then the Lord Jesus will at last "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

O God, we can never come into Thy presence without a sense of shame and a confession of sin. But forgive us that so often we are concerned only with petty personal faults or lapses, forgetting the more serious sin of neglect in playing our right and full part in the sacrificial work of Thy Kingdom. Open our hearts to the appeal of the crucified Christ, and enable us to follow Him as we have not before, that His Kingdom may come on earth. In His name. AMEN.

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:23.

What was the trouble with Peter? He had fallen from being a corner stone to being a stumbling block; from being called "Blessed" to being called "Satan." What had caused the change?

Jesus gives the true reason when He says, "Thou thinkest not the things of God, but the things of men."

We *are* as we *think*. We cannot become false or disingenuous or twisted in our thinking, without showing the result plainly in action.

The greatest thing anyone of us can do, as a personal achievement, or as a service to others, is to "think God's thoughts."

When Kepler made one of his great astronomical discoveries, he said reverently, "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee." To think as God does, rather than as men do, is the secret of all true living and serving.

"How wonderful are Thy thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them. If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. Search me, O God, and know

my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." AMEN.

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:24.

"Let him deny himself." So Jesus said of anyone who would follow him. What did He mean? Why, we answer, He meant that we must cut off pleasures, give up things and ways we like, practice a measure of asceticism.

But that is not what Jesus says, or means. He says, "You must *deny yourself*." That means saying "No" to self when it would have its own way, or claim the first place. Not cutting off this or that pleasure, not any tinkering with externals, but dethroning self, getting one's own will out of the way and setting God's will in control—that is what Jesus means by denying one's self.

Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, amid the sundry and manifold changes of this life, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK, THURSDAY

"If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross."
MATTHEW 16:24.

What does that mean? The conventional answer would be, let him bear his trials without murmuring. It is com-

mon to speak of the unpleasant details of life as "our crosses."

But that is not what the word meant in Christ's day. When men saw a figure going down the street, carrying a cross, they did not say, "There goes a man bearing a load." They said, "There goes a man about to die."

Jesus means that if we are really to "come after" Him, we must be ready to die; so that, when men threaten us, we may point to the cross we carry, and say, "I have already prepared for that."

To "come after" Jesus means entire self-surrender, even to death.

O God, my soul shrinks from the stern, thorough meaning of the call of Thy Son. But I pray that Thy Spirit may keep me from making light of it, or using the great and solemn words "cross," "sacrifice," "surrender," lightly. Give me full realization of their deep meaning; and, by Thy grace, enable me still to come after Jesus on the way to Thee. AMEN.

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK, FRIDAY

"If any man would come after Me, let him follow Me." MATTHEW 16:24.

"Following Christ" is a familiar thought. But do we see the full meaning?

A woman once said of two friends who had climbed a mountain, "I sat in my chair on the hotel veranda, and followed them all the way to the top."

She had not *followed;* she had only *seen where they went.*

We call it "following" Jesus, when we only *watch where He goes.*

"He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."

"O Master, let me walk with Thee
In lowly paths of service free.
In peace that only Thou canst give
With Thee, O Master, let me live."

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK, SATURDAY

"Let him take up his cross daily." LUKE 9:23.

By putting in that little word "daily," the sentence is transformed from a single act, done once for all, to an oft-repeated act. And thus it fits our lives the better.

Perhaps we shall bear the cross more truly and more faithfully if we think of it as something to be taken up with fresh resolution every day, a new commitment to be made every morning, to be put on as one puts on his clothes.

Not that we should ever deliberately lay it down. But we do lay it down very often. It slips from our shoulders. Let us look each day and see if the cross is there, where we can feel it, and others can see it.

"Every day let us renew our purpose, saying to ourselves, I must make a new beginning this day, for all that I have hitherto done is vanity."

O God, even as Thy good gift of sunlight comes afresh with each new day, so may there come in our hearts every day a fresh offering of our lives to Thy service, a renewal of our loyalty and consecration. Help us each day to set ourselves anew at the great task of following Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK, SUNDAY

"For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it." MATTHEW 16:25.

As we read that great saying, our minds turn back to stories of martyrs, heroes who have died for Christ's sake.

Yet the word is not so far removed from us and our affairs as that. It is a great general law of human life, as inescapable as the law of gravitation. One must lose his life if he is to save it. For salvation, as Jesus thought of it, consists in finding something, or Some One, so worth loving and serving that one can give his whole heart and soul in an adventure of devotion. Thus to let one's self go in utter abandonment of love is to find life; and that is salvation.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:25.

This is far more than a law for the individual life. It is a law for organizations, institutions, groups. Most of all it is a law for the church of Christ.

A church that makes the saving of its own life its chief aim will lose its true life; but a church that seeks to make itself a loving, Christlike servant of its community and neighbourhood will find richness of life, spiritual growth, and, in all probability, greater vigour and vitality.

If the church sends out missionaries in order most of all to build up the church itself, to add large numbers to its published roll, to gain prestige, it will fail. But if it carries on its mission work in the name of Christ, in His spirit and for the sake of those who need Christly human service, it will live and win. It is a law from which there is no escape.

O Living Lord, once Thou didst cleanse Thy temple from the greed and selfishness that disgraced it. Cleanse Thy church, we beseech Thee, from the more subtle vices that often cling about it, from all self-seeking, all that forgets human service, and the true glory of God, in the cheap and dazzling glow of its own prestige and power. Make Thy church the humble instrument of Thy good Spirit, that so it may find true life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
JOHN 12:20–26.

A brilliant American writer in a recent book, "A Preface to Morals," searches for the heart of "religion," and finds it in "disinterestedness."

But Jesus found it there first, some nineteen centuries ago. It is His central message. The surest way to lose your life is to try to save it. The surest way to find life is to leave self out of the account. No man is truly and fully *saved* until he has lost sight of self-advantage in the glory of serving some one or some cause worthy of whole-hearted devotion. That is the gate through which one enters into the life that is life indeed.

O God, look upon us and have mercy upon our selfishness, our littleness, our self-centered thoughts and ways. Set us free, we beseech Thee, from all preoccupation with our own comfort, our own importance, our own desires, that we may know the joy of escaping into the pure air and large range of Thy great country where the soul is free, because it has lost itself and found itself in Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" MATTHEW 16:26.

The Greeks had a story of a strange creature, who dwelt by the side of the road, but was not a friend to man. She faced every passer-by with a question. If he could not answer, she threw him over the cliff. At last came a hero, who answered the question; and the sphinx, with a loud cry, threw herself over the precipice, and never troubled people again.

There are questions like that, questions of fact. Some great mind answers them, and they are done for.

But there are other questions—of value. No one can answer them for another. Each must face them for himself.

Still, after nineteen hundred years, comes this question, sharp, challenging as ever. Have I really faced it? I have not begun to live until I have faced it, and answered it.

O God, Who hast set us in a world of wonder, where questions abound, keep our minds open, our judgments unwarped, our vision clear, that we may be honest with all the truth. And, above all, help us to deal unflinchingly with

truth that stings and hurts, knowing well our deep need of Thy keen surgery, if we would be whole. AMEN.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK, THURSDAY

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" MATTHEW 16:26.

We miss the great sweep and force of this question, if we think of the "soul" as something precious within, a kind of seed of future life, an heirloom that entitles us to recognition at God's palace gates.

No; the "soul" is just the self, the life, the real inner personality, *what we are.*

To lose that is the irreparable misfortune. All gains are of value only as they enrich that inner life.

Am I so living that my real inner self grows stronger, finer, richer every day? That is the supreme question. All others are trifling in comparison.

O God, the protector of all who trust in Thee, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy; that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we miss not the things eternal; for Jesus Christ's sake. AMEN.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:26.

Here is a house. It has rooms for many uses—guest rooms and parlours for entertaining friends; a library; a music room; a quiet little room with windows opening to heaven, where one may pray. There is also a storeroom.

But the dweller in the house becomes supremely interested in things. He buys valuable and interesting objects, until his storeroom overflows. Then he piles his purchases all over the house. Friends no longer come; there is no place to see them. Library and music room are cluttered with bales and boxes. The little prayer room is choked with packages.

Valuable things—all of them. But the house has lost its *soul,* its *self.* It has become a mere storehouse.

There are lives like that. God keep me from such a fate!

O Loving God, Who givest us richly all things to enjoy, help us to live in the world, and to enjoy the world, without being lost in its richness. Help us to use the present world, as not abusing it. And to that good end, keep us ever in Thy presence; that the glory of the eternal may outshine the glamour of the temporal. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 16:26.

There are two words here; *gain,* and *give.* Those are the two parts of our living. We are always getting and giving.

Jesus says that there is just one thing supremely worth *gaining;* and one thing supremely worth *giving.* That one thing is our self.

It is good to gain success, honour, comfort, wealth. It is best, incomparably best, to gain one's true and right self. "What entered into thee, That was, is, and shall be."

It is good to give money, time, energy. It is best, incomparably best, to give *one's self.*

"Not what we give but what we share,
For the gift, without the giver, is bare."

What the world needs most is men and women who give the one supreme gift, the self.

O Lord God, over and over we hear Thy voice, calling us to give ourselves to Thee. Help us to find in that call not only a summons to duty, a command from One Whom we should and must obey; but, above all, a call to enter into a rich and full experience of the life that is life indeed. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
JOHN 4:6–10.

Jesus asked something of this woman. She refused to trouble herself to give what He asked. Then He told her she should have thought less of what He demanded of her, and more of what she might have got from Him.

Here is wisdom for every part and phase of our religion. We are so apt to complain that so much is asked of us, by our church, our home, our business, our life, our God.

But we might get so much more than we give! If only we would view all our relationships as so many opportunities and ways of finding richer life, finer treasures, deeper truths, higher joys, we should come to feel that all that is asked of us is but a trifle compared with the living water that streams to us from the grace and goodness of God.

O God, Who givest to us all things richly to enjoy, enable us to see so truly into the heart of Thy dealings with us that we may discern in every demand for our service or giving an

offer of richer life from Thee. It is in our giving that Thou dost give to us most freely and gloriously, Our Father. Open our eyes to this great and wondrous truth, that every response we make to Thy demands may give us a more abundant entrance into Thy grace. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
JOHN 5:30–36.

The practical wisdom of Jesus amazes us more and more, as we come to know Him better. It shines out from this passage, in which He reveals to us the *secret of right judgment.*

What an asset to possess that secret! In business, in social life, in all parts of our conduct and career, it is an inestimable advantage to have the secret of right judgment.

Where does it lie? Jesus knew. He said with truth, "My judgment is just." And He gives three reasons for the claim:

The first is a humble view of one's self. "I can of mine own self do nothing."

The second is an unprejudiced view and estimate of facts. "As I hear, I judge."

The third is a motive of loyalty to the highest. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me."

In those simple, straight sentences is a clear chart of the sure way to right and sound judgment.

O God, from Whom all good thoughts, sound motives, and just works do proceed, help me this day and always to be humble, free from prejudice, and impelled by a desire to do Thy will. So may my soul be set and kept on that path of the just which shines more and more unto the perfect day. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 17:1–8.

Jesus prayed. We know what was in His mind. He was facing the awful certainty of a cruel death, soon to come upon Him. We do not know what form His prayer took. But the result was that *He* was changed.

That is always the true and great result of real prayer. It may not change circumstances. It may not affect outward conditions. But it changes the one who prays.

Paul prayed three times that the thorn might be removed. It was not removed. But he heard within his soul a divine voice, "My grace is sufficient for thee"; and he learned to say, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

The true miracle of prayer is that wrought within the soul of the one who prays.

O God, Who hast done great things in answer to prayer, help me not to cheapen my intercourse with Thee by asking Thy power for little or personal ends. Help me to desire above all the true riches, the inward grace, the joy and strength which can enable me to face life with courage and assurance. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 17:1–8.

"There appeared Moses and Elijah, talking with him."

Jesus found comfort, courage, and new strength, in the companionship of great souls of the past: Moses, the man

who had "talked with God as a man talks with his friend"; Elijah who had dared stand alone for the true God.

A wonderful reservoir of power is in the lives of the saints. Not only the heroes of the Bible story, but the great men and women of all ages: Chrysostom, Augustine, Francis, Tyndale, Livingstone, Judson, Lincoln, and a host of others. To think of them, to have fellowship with them, puts power into us. Let us cherish their companionship.

We praise Thee, O God, for the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the glorious company of the apostles, the faithful body of missionaries, the innumerable host of faithful men and women, who have served Thee loyally, and still inspire us by their example.

"O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia!"

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 17:1–8.

"A voice, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him."

How often we have wished that God would speak. Why does He not break the awful silence, when some gigantic evil stalks through His world; or when His people are in darkness and doubt?

Well, here He did speak. But only to tell those who heard to look at a human life, and listen to its message.

God has no revelation of Himself or of His will to make beyond that which is in the soul of man, in the life of hu-

manity, and, above all, in the life and words of the One Perfect Man, the Man Christ Jesus.

Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me; for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 17:1–8. (Note especially verse four.)

It was a natural impulse on Peter's part. He was enjoying so deeply this rare spiritual experience, that he would gladly have stayed in it for the rest of his life.

Many of us have a similar feeling.

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this."

But Jesus led them down to the crowd and the life at the foot of the mountain. He would not leave them in selfish enjoyment of even the highest spiritual privilege.

Nor will He leave us there. We may have our moments of high spiritual vision and glory. Thank God for them! But the godly life has in it more than that. Thank God for that!

O God, Who hast sent Thy Son to guide us through the devious ways of life into Thy perfect path, help us to follow Him gladly, whether He lead us up the mountain of privilege or down into the valley of service. Help us to win, as He did, a life at once at home with Thee and at home among men. In His name. AMEN.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 17:1–8.

"They saw no man, but Jesus only."

In that little, simple sentence what a splendour of revelation of what Christians need above all!

If only all Christians, the whole church, could "see no man but Jesus only," how the unessential, the divisive, the trivial, the showy, would fade.

They had been watching Moses and Elijah. But now they had eyes only for Jesus. We have been keeping our eyes so much on Calvin, and Luther, and the Westminster Fathers, and a host of other good men. How it would unite us and inspire us, if Jesus should become all in all!

"Yea, through life, death, through sorrow and through sinning,
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed.
Christ is the end, as Christ was the beginning;
Christ the beginning; for the end is Christ."

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
JOHN 12:20–26.

What the world needs above all else is to see Jesus. Not only to read about Him, and to hear about Him; but to know Him for one's self is the deep need of every man.

Would you play your part in the development of religion and its influence in the life of mankind?

Get to know Jesus for yourself, find your own way to Him, your own knowledge of Him, that others may see Him in you.

There is a very real and deep need just now of thousands of Christian men and women interpreting Jesus in living terms of their own life.

Lord, Thou hast called me to be a witness for Thee. Help me to be a true witness and a faithful one. Give me persistence, open-mindedness and honesty, that I may know Christ as He was and is; and courage, wisdom, tact, and faith, that I may help others to see Him as He was and is. For His name's sake. AMEN.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MARK 9:17–24.

Here is light on faith, its nature and power. Read the story in the Revised Version, and catch the significance of that exclamation, "If Thou canst!" That word of doubt Jesus takes out from the midst of the man's cry for help, and shows him that the real doubt does not lie there. To the distressed, longing, yet doubting soul of the father, the great question was, *Could Jesus do it?* Jesus vividly shows him that the decisive question was not as to the power of Christ, but as to the faith of the man.

That is still the decisive question. Whenever we come to a place where God alone can do what is needed, the crucial matter is, *Do we believe?* Will we stake everything on God's power and love?

O God, still must we pray in the ancient words, "We believe; help Thou our unbelief." Faith and unbelief strug-

gle in our souls. We believe, and yet we doubt. Help us to trust Thee, and to go on trusting, in spite of the backward pull of all our doubts. Lead us on to the doing of Thy will, that we may know more of Thee. AMEN.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 17:19–21.

"If ye have faith, nothing shall be impossible unto you."

What is this, a promise of magical power? Did Jesus mean that real faith would bring to His disciples an easy means of doing miracles?

No one could know the mind of Jesus and think that. It is the word of a poet, clothing in exuberant language the great truth that the Christian must never admit impossibility in the way of the doing of the will of God.

I stood once in a group of men, and outlined a new and rather daring adventure. I asked, "Is it wise?" One of them answered, "No; it's one of the most foolish things I ever heard of. *Let's do it.*" That was the true Christian spirit. The work was started, and is still blessing its community. Christians are here to do the unwise and the impossible.

O God, give us courage. Help us to dare greatly, and yet not to be foolish or presumptuous. Enable us, as Thy good servant said, to attempt great things for God, and expect great things from God. So may there pass through our little lives into the great life of the world currents of living power, that shall do Thy will, in the face of all who proclaim that it cannot be done. In Jesus' name. AMEN.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 18:1, 2.

He set a little child in the midst of them. So He answered their question.

That is how He is trying to answer our questions today. If only we would look, we should see Him setting a little child in the midst. What about divorce? War? Lack of good living conditions? Need of education? Get your mind on the little children, and the sort of a world that will be good for them to be born into, and brought up in; you will see the answer to those problems more readily; for in your heart will burn the hot determination to do away with the "social wants that sin against the strength of youth."

O Living God, Who once didst walk among men as a little child, that grew daily in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man; keep our eyes and our hearts ever on the children; and create and nourish within us a holy purpose never to rest until the children are all suffered to come to Thee; for of such is Thy Kingdom. AMEN.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 18:1–4.

What does it mean to "humble one's self as a little child?" Are little children humble, self-forgetful? Anyone who knows them knows that they are amusingly (or irritatingly) self-important, egocentric.

Jesus must have had in mind the *position* of the little child.

His opinion is not considered as important. He is set aside when serious matters are to be discussed.

So must the true member of the Kingdom of God be ready to take any place, to receive little recognition, to be made of little importance.

A keen student of religious conditions in China recently remarked, "The sort of missionary needed today is hard to find; he must be capable of taking first place and ready to take second place." That is the spirit and attitude needed in the Kingdom of God everywhere.

"Quiet, Lord, my froward heart,
Make me teachable and mild;
Upright, gentle, free from art,
Make me as a weanéd child;
From distrust and envy free,
Pleased with all that pleaseth Thee."

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." MATTHEW 18:3.

It is characteristic of the child's mind that it is eager to learn. It is free from the trammels of tradition that later seize upon the mind and clamp it.

The very spirit of free inquiry that lies at the root of the modern development of science is in this saying of Jesus. No less a leader than Huxley said that the kingdom of science is open on the same terms as the Kingdom of Heaven; that the true scientist is one who sits down before a fact like a little child, prepared to follow it wherever it may lead.

How strange, how unwarranted, in the light of this great

saying is the tendency in the Christian Church to prize conformity, loyalty to tradition, perpetuation of ancient ideas. Jesus wants the childlike mind, eager with its questions, open to new thoughts and fresh truth, ready to follow light and truth though it lead one clear away from his present or inherited ideas.

O God of the open air and the boundless sky, call us out, we implore Thee, with a voice that must be obeyed, from the dull and dim dwellings wherein our souls too contentedly live, to follow Thee on new paths, by the light of the stars, on that continual pioneering ever led by the Christ that is to be. Send out Thy light and truth, that they may lead us; and give us grace to follow where they lead. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 18:5, 6.

A distinguished American psychologist once said, "If there be a sin against the Holy Ghost it is the sin of doing anything that would injure or thwart the promise of one's own or another's youth."

Such is the judgment of Jesus. Seldom or never did He invoke a more terrible punishment than upon the one who injures a child.

How would our civilization stand that test? Imagine a world in which every nation planned all its life, from the regulation of domestic affairs to the most intricate dealings with other nations, with an eye single to the providing of a world into which little children could be born, and in which they could develop, normally, wholesomely, happily,

and in touch with God. What a world that would be! Truly "such would be the Kingdom of God." What am I doing to make it more likely to come?

Forgive us, O Lord of Love, all our many sins. But above all, cleanse us from our thoughts, words, and acts that sin against the tender hearts and souls of children. Free us from the coarse and evil ways that stunt or mislead their lives. Aid us to put out of the way all that may cause them to stumble. In the name of Thy Holy Child, Jesus. AMEN.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 18:10.

In all the world that God has made, what comes nearest to Him, is most like Him, means most to Him?

Jesus leaves no doubt on that point. He tells us not to despise the children; for God cares more about them than about anything else. The angels that have them in their care stand nearest the throne; they always have access to the Father. He wants them close at hand.

Here is added emphasis on the thought that the welfare of children is the most vital concern of human society. For our world can never be like the Kingdom of God until the child is at the centre, the object of our most constant solicitude and care.

O God, Who for us men and our salvation didst come among us as a little child, help us to see in every child something of Thee, a tender grace and possibility of godliness which must be fostered and developed at any cost. Keep us ever from despising, or thinking lightly of, any of the chil-

dren; and, by Thy grace, help us to make of this world a blessed playground for all children. In Jesus' name. AMEN.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 18:10–14.

"It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

Then why is it that so many of them do perish? Half the children born in India die before the age of five. And what a host, even in the most favoured countries, perish, by premature death, or by that far more sad way of losing the soul, having the true life taken from them.

Is not all this by the will of God?

No! It is by the evil will of man, who will not allow life to conform to the loving will of God.

When I see injustice, exploitation, and other evil forces spoiling the beauty and promise of youth, let me set myself on the side of God's holy will, praying, "Thy will be done on earth," and resolving that, just so far as I can bring it about, that blessed will shall be done.

Forgive us, O God, for the ease with which we shift the burden of moral responsibility from our shoulders to Thine; for the sin of looking upon evil and wrong and injustice, and saying, "It is the will of God." Deep in my soul confirm the faith that nothing evil is in Thy will; and by Thy grace help me to set my little feeble will to work with and for that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, in which is our peace and our true joy. AMEN.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
LUKE 2:40–52.

This precious little passage is all we know about the thirty years of the early life of our Lord. Just a glimpse, no more.

But it sheds light on a problem which is coming to mean more and more in this modern age, the problem of religious education.

Here is One Who grew through childhood and youth into a manhood so perfect that His followers dare call Him Son of God. And the one story which remains of His youthful days shows us One Who felt at home in "His Father's House." He had learned to know God as His Father, and to feel it natural to seek His presence.

If more children were so trained throughout their early days, there might be more men and women like Jesus.

Eternal Father of all, into Whose Kingdom only the child-like can enter, through the life and teaching of home and school and church reveal Thyself, we pray, unto our children; that they may early come to know Thee and to love Thee, and may never lose that knowledge and love, but may grow each year in fellowship with Thee until they attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. AMEN.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." LUKE 2:52.

Here is summed up in few words the beautiful growth of a perfect child.

We love and adore the man Jesus for His perfect wisdom.

"Never man so spake." There is in His words not only knowledge; but a wisdom that penetrates to the heart of reality. Even more do we adore Him for His grace, which makes good men and women love Him, and makes us sure that the favor of God rests upon Him in its fulness as upon no other son of man.

Into this perfection of wisdom and grace He grew year by year, through childhood and youth.

Is there any desire that a father or mother may have for a child more worthy than that their home may prove to be a place in which the child may steadily grow not only in years and in stature, but in wisdom and in grace like that of Jesus?

O God, let Thy tender mercy rest on all fathers and mothers, on all to whom has been committed the care of children, that they may discharge faithfully their sacred trust, with such wisdom, love, and faith in Thee that nothing may hinder the free and steady growth of children into true godliness and grace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 19:16–22.

"If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments." "If thou wouldst be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and come, follow me."

What do you want, security, or perfection? To get along comfortably, or to live nobly?

If you want safety, says Jesus, conform, do as others do, keep the standards and customs that obtain in your circle.

But there is another way to live; to seek "the flying per-

fect"; to climb higher all the time; to win the best. Conformity will not bring that richest life. If you would find that, do something positive, original, personal, sacrificing, daring. Stake your life on something high and great. Only so can you enter on the path that leads to the perfect.

O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee; without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy; that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we miss not the things eternal. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
JOHN. 17:1–3.

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God."

Such a saying may easily seem esoteric, mystical, remote from real life.

Look closely at it, and see. It is in fact dealing with the greatest and most practical of matters, "What is real life?"

What is life *for?* What are its true ends? What *is* this life I am here to live, the life worth living, the "life that is life indeed"?

Is not the very centre and essence of it found in relationships? Not in things, but in persons; in companionships, friendships.

Then the highest and best life would be found in relationship with the highest and best person, would it not?

That is just what Jesus says: "This is real life, to know

Thee, the only true God." Not to know God as one knows a fact, but to know Him as one knows a friend. That is real life.

O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself; we give Thee thanks for the beautiful and blessed fellowships that form and enrich our life. Help us to be faithful in them all. Help us also, we pray, to mount through them and by their means into the highest and all-inclusive fellowship wherein our spirit comes to be at home in Thy spirit, and we find life in the knowledge of Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
JOHN. 17:1–3.

"This is life eternal, to know Thee,—and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."

Is it not enough to know God, however we may come to that knowledge? Yes; but it is not easy to arrive at the personal knowledge of the Infinite God. And here as elsewhere Christ is the Way.

The word "God" is so vast, so open to various meanings; it so easily becomes vague. We find real life, highest life, only when we know God as a Person, as a Friend. And we know Him best in that personal way through knowledge of Jesus Christ, Whom He sent that we might know Him.

It has been well said that the word "God" is a frame, the meaning and value of which depend on the picture one puts in it. One who knows Jesus Christ has the true picture to fit the frame.

We thank Thee, O God, for the stars that reveal Thy glory and majesty, for the powers of nature, the wonder of the world, the beauty that is everywhere, all the goodness and loveliness in which our souls know something of Thee. But above all do we bless Thee for the revelation of Thyself in human spirits, in the goodness and greatness of character, of love, of faith; and "for Thine inestimable love" in sending our Lord Jesus Christ that we might see the glory of God in His face as we could not even in the starry sky. Help us to find in Him our sure and straight way to fellowship with Thee; knowing Him, to know Thee; and loving Him, to love Thee. AMEN.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
LUKE 12:13–21.

Some years ago I met a very attractive student at one of our best-known women's colleges. Later I asked a relative of hers how she was getting on. He told me a sad story of failure and disappointment. When, shocked, I asked for the explanation, he said, "She had two serious handicaps, money and popularity."

Money and popularity! Would we count them drawbacks, dangers? Do we not desire them for our children, our young friends?

Was not Jesus right? "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." Without inward godliness outward possessions are always a danger. When will our materialistic age learn the simple message of Jesus?

Almighty God, Who by Thy Divine Power hast given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, grant that we fail not of Thine exceeding great and precious promises; but, escaping the corruption that is in the world through selfishness, may be made partakers of the Divine nature; through the knowledge of Him Who hath called us by His own glory and virtue, even Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 20:20–23.

What a natural thought! "If I am a follower of Jesus, close to Him, part of the circle of His intimates, of course He will have me in mind when He distributes His special favours."

But Jesus answers plainly, unmistakably, that in His Kingdom and fellowship there can be no "special privilege," no "pull." Not even He can say who shall sit on His right hand or left. Distinguished place must be won, not given as a favour.

There is one realm then where merit wins, and special favour plays no part; the Kingdom of God. Not even the apostles have particular consideration. Thank God for the true equality of His Kingdom!

O God, forbid that selfishness should rear its head in the garden of my inner life. May I count it my rich reward to serve Thee, with no thought of favours from Thee, or privileges given to me above others. So may I live and work in the true spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 20:20–23.

The thought is often voiced that Jesus has little help to give in the larger affairs of life.

But here is a principle the full adoption and use of which would go far to transform our political and social life and make it ideal. Suppose in our cities, and nations (for that matter in our churches) that no recognition or special privilege could be obtained except on the ground of merit; what a world this would be!

Yet that would be only putting to use a plain word of the Master.

Our whole civilization needs, as it needs nothing else, the desire and the purpose to carry into all parts of our life the great ideals and wise teachings of our Lord.

O God, Who hast sent into the life of the world the light of the world, in our Lord Jesus Christ, grant that we may heed His teachings, love His ideals, catch His Spirit, live in His light, and walk in His ways; that so the life of humanity may be saved and transfigured, and the creation itself be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. AMEN.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
JOHN 18:33–38.

Through this passage we get a clear, sharp view of two men, as through a lens. Each of them is thinking about truth. Their attitudes are in sharpest contrast.

Pilate looks at the young man brought for judgment, and hears Him say that His Kingdom is that of truth. Pilate asks, "What is truth?" Whether scornful or wistful, the question reveals a soul that has no use for ideals, that counts truth an illusion, a dream.

But to the soul of Jesus truth is a supreme good. It is something to die for, something to live for, a great gift of God which one must not lose.

What is your view? Is truth to you a glory to be won and held, or an illusion to be sadly set aside? Search your daily thoughts and acts for the answer.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. See if there be any falseness in me, and lead me in the way of truth. Send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me; yea, let them bring me to Thy holy hill. Day by day make Thy way of truth plain before my face; and let me never turn aside from it. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 21:23–27.

On the face of it, this seems an adroit evasion of a natural question, justifiable only because of the insincere spirit of those who propounded it.

But there is vastly more in it. Jesus really went to the heart of the question of authority in religion, when He gave this simple, straight reply.

When they asked Him to give account of Himself, and to show the authority by which He spoke and acted as He

did, He referred them to their own simple, ordinary tests. How did they know when a man, a teaching, a system, was from God? He would not ask any other test, or offer any other evidence. Christ always rests back on facts, on natural instincts, on plain good sense. He wants no authority but that which the simple, reverent soul instinctively gives.

Would that His Church had been as wise, and were as wise today!

O wisdom of the Living God, make us content with simple things and thoughts. Keep us from demanding signs and portents, or from demanding from the consciences of others implicit obedience to imposed authority. Cleanse our hearts, and clear our vision, that we may know what is true, and see the way that is right, and so be guided in Thine own paths. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK, FRIDAY

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." MATTHEW 18:20.

"When thou prayest," said Jesus, "enter into thy closet and shut the door, and pray to thy Father in secret."

But there is something blessed and helpful also in common worship. When a group meets, two or three, or more, who love the Lord, and gather in His name, there His presence is peculiarly known and felt.

There is something of value in public worship, in the sacrament, in any gathering in the name of Jesus, that never comes to the single worshipper alone in his room. We need both, the secret, personal prayer, and the common group meeting. Each has its own ministry, its own assurance of the presence and the blessing of the Unseen Friend.

Almighty God, Who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto Thee: and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in Thy name Thou wilt grant their requests; fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of Thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of Thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. AMEN.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 18:21–35.

Here, as at the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus emphasizes solemnly the necessity of unlimited forgiveness. One who will not forgive cannot hope to be forgiven.

Our Lord gives space to one of His longest stories to illustrate this duty and solemn necessity of forgiveness. He closes it with the most emphatic warning that only if we forgive others can we hope that God will forgive us.

Have I taken that lesson to heart? Have I never asked God to forgive me, when I was unwilling myself to forgive some injury, or slight? God pity our childishness, and give us His own vision of the glory of forgiving grace and love!

O God, Who hast taught us to keep all Thy heavenly commandments by loving Thee and our neighbour, grant us the spirit of peace and grace, that Thy universal family may be devoted to Thee with their whole heart, and united to one another with a perfect charity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 19:1–15.

Why was Jesus so severe in the standard He set up for married faithfulness, so strong in condemning the breaking of the marriage tie?

Is not the explanation in large part found in the tender incident that follows His severe and searching words? It was because His thought was on the *children*. To His mind the supreme consideration of every home, to which all else should be subordinate, is the good of the children. A home is above all a place where children of God may grow normally and beautifully. To destroy such a garden is desecration. Men and women may well endure anything, rather than fail to give to their children a right to that eternal life which is the Kingdom of Heaven.

O God, bless the children and those in whose care they are set. Open the minds and hearts of all who have to do with the little ones to the exceeding importance of that task. May they feel that no sacrifice is too great to be cheerfully made, if by it the life of one of Thy little ones may be the more firmly set on the way of holiness, peace, and joy. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK, MONDAY

"Of such is the kingdom of heaven." MATTHEW 19:14.

Jesus did not mean, simply or chiefly, that little children, when they die, go straight to God. That is a blessed realiza-

tion for all out of whose arms and home children have slipped away.

But our Lord was here thinking of His Kingdom on earth, that reign of God in the affairs of men to which He gave His thoughts more than to any other subject.

And He shows that the right care of children is the hope of that Kingdom. "Give me the children," He cries; "and my kingdom will come."

In all the world there is nothing more essential than that the children shall come to know and love God through knowing and loving Christ. To that great end we should give ourselves as to nothing else.

O God, we pray for the coming of Thy Kingdom, and plan for it, and work for it. Forgive us that so often we fail to see how much might be done for that blessed Kingdom for which we long, if we patiently and lovingly cared for the children. Help us never to stand between them and the Lord Whom they would love, and to Whom they would come, if we opened the way. Give us childlike hearts, that we may win them to Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 19:16.

"Eternal life" seems far away, concerned with another world. But see how Jesus deals with it. "If thou wouldst *enter into life,*" he answers.

Eternal life means not life after death, but real life, now or bye and bye; it means, to use Paul's fine phrase, "the life that is life indeed."

How this story appeals to the youth of our day! This is what they want, life, "the real thing," to break through the surface into real living.

Well for them if they come to Jesus, as this young man did long ago. He has "the words of eternal life," as no one else has ever had them. He stands and cries to those who seek for real life in cheap and passing pleasures, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Lord, Thou has set us here that we may live, and that at no poor dying rate, but vividly, completely, gloriously. Keep us from wasting our strength in idle things of the passing moment. Set and keep our hearts and thoughts on the true and eternal realities; that by Thy grace we may enter into life and abide there. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 19:16–20.

A strange answer Jesus gives to the young man who asks how he can find "real life." "Keep the commandments," Jesus says. That is the last counsel we would expect. Jesus came to emphasize spirit, not law.

Why then did He give this advice?

He wanted to draw out the youth, and see what was in his mind. So He gave the conventional answer, and watched for the reaction.

It came. "I have tried that," said the youth, "and it doesn't work." Had he been a youth of our day, he might have said that there "isn't any kick to be got out of keeping commandments."

Paul found out that great truth. The law is good; keeping the law is a part of right living. But something more is needed than that, if one is to "enter into life." One doesn't find life by keeping rules. That is one of Christ's primary lessons.

O God, Giver of all good counsel, from Whom came the law expressed in commandments, we bless Thee for Thy further and deeper revelation through Thy prophets, and through Thy Son, our Lord. Lead us out of bondage to the letter into the freedom of the spirit, that we may truly enter into life, and find ever new joy in Thy fellowship. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 19:16–20.

If this were an interview between the Master and a representative modern youth of the more thoughtful kind, we might fitly add an imaginary scene. For after confessing that keeping commandments had not proved a way of entering into life, the youth would very likely go on to say, "I have also tried the way of breaking the commandments, of seeking freedom from law and restraint; the way of self-expression. For a while, it seemed to work. But then I found that it lost zest. When there were no more laws to be broken, what was left?"

Neither keeping the law by a mechanical obedience, nor breaking the law as a demonstration of personal liberty, can give one true "entrance into life." The judgment of the Master still holds; even worse than careful keeping of the

commandments is deliberate breaking of them. Neither is the way to fulness of life.

Make me free, O Lord, free and fearless in this great and wonderful world of Thine. Let me go on my way, unhampered by rules, restraints, or bonds of any sort. Yet keep me free also, O God of majestic law and order, from that "unchartered freedom" that brings weariness and disillusion rather than joy. May I ever hear a voice behind me, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when I turn to the right hand or to the left. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 19:20–22.

Here we come upon the heart of the answer Jesus gave to the earnest questioning of this youth.

This is the point of it: "If you would really enter into life, take neither the path of traditional obedience, nor the path of revolt. Do something original, unusual, something of your own. Go and sell all you have, give it to the poor; and come, follow me."

We miss the point of this counsel if we think the main part of it is the call to poverty. It was a challenge, a "dare," a call to do something and be something for one's self.

Such is the call of Christ to young and eager spirits today. He "calls us by His own glory and manhood," as Peter says. Move out of the realm of laws and rules altogether into the joy of adventure, the exaltation of trying a new path, of daring something great for Christ's sake, and for humanity's sake.

Our Christianity is too easily content with the conventional. Let Christ call us out to new ventures. That will mean life.

Lead us, O God, not always in green pastures, or beside still waters. Call us to climb to the heights; lead us over difficult trails; and give us grace to follow that call, that we may be led into that abundant life that comes only to the loyal souls that will follow Christ wherever He may lead. AMEN.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"He went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions." MATTHEW 19:22.

What a strange sequence of ideas! Why should not one be very happy, if he is very rich?

He should be. Possessions, rightly used, are helps to happiness. But they can be, and often they are, cumbering baggage, weights to be carried, weeds that bear the poisonous seeds of worry.

It all depends on how we use them. When men make an airplane, they study to eliminate every ounce of superfluous weight. Let it be light, so that it may fly! But they put in it a heavy mass of metal that outweighs any other single part. Why? Because that mass is the motor. It gives *power*.

So "things," possessions, may be a motor power in one's life, giving it greater freedom, richer living. If they are that, so much the better. But if they are useless weights to be carried, one's best course is to be rid of them. The trouble was, he did not have the possessions; they had him.

O God, free my life from useless encumbrances, that I may have strength to bear the burdens of others, to meet the

urgent calls of duty, strength to mount up with wings, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. Help me to draw from everything that I possess its power to give energy to my life; and grant me grace to sacrifice resolutely and cheerfully all that holds me down from the high places, or keeps me from moving freely forward into Thine abundant life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FORTIETH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 19:23–26.

It seems a grotesque exaggeration. How could anything be harder than the impossible? And what is more impossible than for a camel—slow, ungainly, monstrous creature —to go through the eye of a needle?

Perhaps it was an exaggeration. Poets and prophets are not afraid of overstatement, if thereby they can impress a vital truth.

Is not this the explanation—that Jesus would impress upon men's minds, as forcibly as possible, the danger of money, the way it could keep one out of the best experiences of life? So He deliberately illustrated it by a synonym of impossibility. To His sane, God-inspired mind, nothing material could possibly count for so much, mean so much, as a spiritual fact or experience. And the wildest symbol of impossibility was not too strong to set forth the danger and evil of having *money* get hold of one's soul.

Yet at the end He sounds a note of hope, yes, of certainty. Take God into the account, and nothing is impossible. One *can* be rich and still get into the kingdom, if God takes hold of the situation.

We often cite the saving a man from the gutter as the great proof of God's grace. Jesus took the saving of a rich man. Might we not have a saner view of life if we saw it through His eyes?

Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, amid the sundry and manifold changes of this life, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTIETH WEEK, MONDAY

"Peter said, Lo, we have left all and followed Thee. What then shall we have?" MATTHEW 19:27.

A natural question! Who of us has not sometimes asked in his heart, "What shall I have? What reward will come to me, here or in heaven, for my service of Christ?"

What a different spirit shines through the brave words of that greater disciple who said that he had suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but refuse, that he might win Christ! Having fellowship with Christ, he had enough, and did not ask for any reward, any more than the true lover wants pay for giving his love. "The only money of God is God," said Emerson. And a poet of an earlier time said, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee."

Only when we love God for the joy of loving Him have we found the true and living way.

"My God, I love Thee, not because
I hope for heaven thereby;
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Must die eternally;
Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Or seeking a reward;
But freely, fully, as Thyself
Hast lovéd me, O Lord."

FORTIETH WEEK, TUESDAY

"Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." LUKE 10:28.

This man thought he did not know the way of true life, life with God. He felt sure that what he needed was more light.

Jesus laid His hand on the very mistake the man was making. He asked the man to tell Him what was in the Word of God, and he told Him instantly and correctly. Then Jesus said, "Thou hast *answered* right; this *do,* and thou shalt live."

The trouble was not that he did not know what to do; it was that he did not do what he knew.

That is the trouble with most of us Christians. We cry out and pray for more knowledge; but all the time it is true that if we would act on the knowledge we have, we would find the way of life.

It is well to pray for more light. But if we get up and walk in the light we have, we shall find the light growing clearer with every step.

We bless Thee, O God, that Thou hast said that that path that shineth more and more unto the perfect day is

the path not of the learned, but of the just. Make us just, honest in our hearts, fair in dealing with truth; so may we find and keep that shining path that leads to Thine eternal light. AMEN.

FORTIETH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
LUKE 10:29, 36.

"Who is my neighbour?" "Which of these proved neighbour?"

There is a world of difference between the spirit and attitude of the one question and of the other. God's law of love to one's neighbour is held by the first in abeyance until a theoretical question is answered as to the identity of the neighbour to be served. But the second is most concerned about playing the part of neighbour, and will gladly serve anyone who needs help, finding a neighbour in every such condition.

It is not the man who professes, "I will serve my neighbour if you will demonstrate to me who he is"; it is rather the one who says, "I want to be a neighbour to anybody and everybody," who is surest to keep the law; for he has the spirit and mind of Jesus.

O God our Father, grant that we may not only depend upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ for our own salvation and strength; but may also enter into His grace, serving others with the unreserved willingness and gladness with which He gave Himself for all; through the same Lord Jesus, Thy Son, our Saviour. AMEN.

FORTIETH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
LUKE 10:25–37.

It is a specious plea—that we should take our Lord and His teachings literally.

But it is a mistaken plea.

Apply it in the case of this parable of the Good Samaritan.

You find a man along the road, the victim of a hold-up. Instantly you recall this parable, and want to do as Jesus would have you do.

Your first instinct will be to use your first-aid kit. But, no! "Wine and oil," Jesus said. You cannot minister to his wounds until you find some oil and wine.

You start to call a taxi, or to telephone for an ambulance. But then you remember that our Lord says nothing about taxis or ambulances. You hunt frantically for a donkey on which to set the poor fellow.

Shall you take him to a hospital? No; Jesus said "to an inn." So you go off with him to a hotel; and then you offer two cents to the landlord to pay for his care!

That would be "taking Jesus literally." How much better if you took Him seriously and sensibly, interpreting His spirit and ideals by the best intelligence you possess.

O Spirit of the Living God, Who hast given us in Jesus the light of life, let that light shine more and more into the common places and along the common ways of life; that in Thy light we may see light, and in Thy straight way may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTIETH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
LUKE 12:4, 5.

Instinctively we are on guard against all those facts and forces that can injure our outer life, our health, our wealth, our success, our business interests. Jesus says that if we are wise, we shall be much more concerned lest our inner life be harmed or corrupted. There lies the real danger. There are eternal treasures to be guarded. To be injured there is the worst fate.

A minister once went to talk with a woman about her boy, who was running wild on the street, and sorely needed kind and firm watchfulness. But she answered with a sort of pride: "Nothing can hurt that boy; he's the toughest kid in town."

We condemn that mother. But who of us is not in danger of falling into her error, of thinking that the greatest perils are those of life and limb, rather than those of soul and spirit?

O God, Who art our defence and refuge, our constant protector from the assaults of enemies, help us to desire Thy protection above all in the life we live silently in the depths of the heart; that there we may be safe, through Thy purifying and enlightening grace; and so be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. AMEN.

FORTIETH WEEK, SATURDAY

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." LUKE 12:32.

What a riot of imagery in this saying! How can a father give a kingdom to a flock?

It does seem absurd. Yet all these elements are necessary to the complete idea and ideal of the Christian experience.

God is our Shepherd, and we are the sheep of His pasture.

God is our King, and we are His subjects and followers.

God is our Father, and we are His children.

The home, the kingdom, the fold—each is only part of the picture. What God has for us, and does for us, is so rich that only all three comparisons can begin to define it.

We thank Thee, O God, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things Thou has prepared for them that love Thee. Keep us from lingering in small or partial ideas of Thee and of Thy grace; lead us into the fulness of Thy revelation of Thyself and of life when lived in Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
LUKE 12:32.

What a message for the Church! Here it is, a little flock, conscious of its weakness amid the mighty world forces. Christ says, "God will give you the *Kingdom*."

Too much the company of Christians has been content with being a flock, when it should aspire to the Kingdom.

We sing, "Like a mighty army moves the Church of God." But, too often, when the world moves against that "army," it is as when Don Quixote charged into the dust cloud where he thought an army was concealed, to find only a helpless flock of sheep.

Our Lord Jesus is more than a tender shepherd. God means that He shall be King over all the life of the world; and we are Christians that He may be King. It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom.

O God, lead us out, we beseech Thee, from our easy contentment with sheltered lives into hard and honourable service of Thee. Help us to glory in arduous service, and to find in suffering and sacrifice for the sake of Thee and Thy Kingdom a deeper joy than can ever be found in green pastures and beside still waters. Help us to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on Eternal Life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK, MONDAY

Read
LUKE 12:49, 50.

Fire, and baptism!

Jesus saw clearly that one of these would be the inevitable result of His presence in the world; and that the other must be there to make it a blessing and not a danger.

Wherever Christ comes, the fire is kindled. Men's minds are set free, their desires are enlarged, new visions of rich and abundant life appear to them. They know the truth, and the truth sets them free.

Often leaders of the world's life are afraid of this fire.

They do not want real Christianity to be preached, lest the flame break out. There *is* danger; but it can be met rightly not by repression, but by the baptism of Christians into the spirit of sacrifice and service, the spirit of the cross.

The fire, and the baptism! The flame and the cross! The world is blazing with the fire of freedom. The Church must be baptized with the spirit of sacrifice; for only so can the fire become, not a lurid danger, but a manifestation of the glory of God.

O God, Who didst lead Thy people by a pillar of fire, help us to rejoice and not to fear, when minds are set free, when nations rise and demand justice and liberty, when the whole world glows with the light of freedom; and to yield our hearts and lives the more to Thy Spirit's influence, that by our consecrated and unreserved devotion we may help to keep the spirit of freedom and the hopes of men in the way of true progress toward Thy Kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
LUKE 14:7–11.

Here is an instance of the keen wisdom of Jesus, a proof that we can trust Him to direct us in the homely, practical affairs of life.

When a well-known wit said, "It is better to be discovered in the back seat than to be found out in the front seat," many applauded. But it is doubtful if many of them realized that Jesus had voiced exactly the same judgment nineteen centuries ago.

It is good counsel for all the conduct of life. Not the arrogant, but the humble; not the man anxious for recognition, but the man eager to serve, wins the first place in the esteem of right-minded people.

It may help us to keep in mind this needed teaching of our Lord, if we put it in its modern dress, "It is better to be discovered in the back seat than to be found out in the front seat."

O God, arouse and foster in us the grace of true humility; not a conscious or assumed attitude, lest we grow proud of being humble, and find the vice of self-satisfaction dwelling in our souls in the guise of a virtue. But give us true humility; and to that end keep before us the vision of Thy glory and greatness, that we may be ashamed of our littleness and exalted by our fellowship with Thee. AMEN.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
LUKE 14:15.

What a religious man this must have been! His remark has the flavour of deep piety. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God!"

But the beauty of the exclamation fades when we see why the man so spoke. Jesus was reminding them of unpleasant truths, uncomfortable duties. He was coming close to their personal sins and faults. It was time, this man thought, to change the conversation. So he broke in with a devout expression of longing for the glory and bliss of the Kingdom that was to come!

Have we never followed his example? Have Christians never evaded the thought of hard and unpleasant duties by

fixing their thoughts on the life to come? Has the contemplation of "Jerusalem the Golden" never been used to draw our thoughts away from the poverty and distress and evil of the present world? True religion is not, as misguided men declare, "an opiate." But religion may be so used, or abused.

O God, let the light of the perfect world that is to come ever fall upon us, to cheer and guide us. But help us, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, never to be dazzled by its radiance, nor to be unfitted by its contemplation for the hard and stern tasks awaiting us here. May we ever follow Jesus, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and did Thy will on earth as it is done in heaven. AMEN.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
LUKE 15:1, 2.

Jesus quietly and steadily went His way in defiance of social custom and prejudice, consorting with people of dubious repute. Christians must follow His example. One who is too holy to touch sinful people is not like Christ.

Yet it is a wrong inference, when we think this excuses or justifies consorting with sinners on their terms, or because we enjoy low living and low standards. We know beyond doubt that Jesus did not go with sinners because He enjoyed sin. He went with them in order to shame them, and lift them to a higher and finer life.

One who follows the Master in this must expect to be criticized and condemned. But let him keep his motives pure

in the sight of God, and he need not care very much about the judgments of men.

O God our Father, help us to love all because we love Thee, and Thou lovest all. May we never hold aloof from any of Thy children whom we can help, or sit in judgment on their faults. Help us to love them as Thou hast loved us, and defend us from all self-righteousness; that in all our relations with men and women and children we may truly walk in the way of our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
LUKE 15:1, 2.

A Christian should rejoice and thank God when he finds in other religions traces of the spirit of Christ, the Light of the World. A cultured Hindu quoted in private conversation with a Christian this beautiful incident from the Bhagavad Gita:

"Someone," said he, "once asked the Lord Krishna, 'Is it well that a man should leave his home, abandon his calling, go into the desert, and live as a hermit, in order to be holy?' And the Lord Krishna answered, 'If by leaving home, abandoning his calling, going into the desert, and living as a hermit, a man can become holy, that is well. But it would be better if he would stay in his home, keep on with his work, live a normal life, and still be holy.'

"That," continued the Hindu, "is like the mind of Jesus."

O God, Who hast caused light to shine out of darkness, and Who sendest us every day the sun to gladden us by his radiance, give to us also the still more precious inward light,

even the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; that, amid all the darkness of the world, we may walk as in the day. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK, SATURDAY

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." LUKE 19:10.

If that is why Jesus came, then that is why we are here. His mission is our mission.

But who are the "lost"? What does that word mean? To our fathers it carried a dread suggestion of eternal death. "Lost" meant irretrievably condemned.

But to Jesus, as some one has beautifully said, "lost means not yet found." The authoritative interpretation of the word, in the light of Christ's mind, is in the fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, which St. Augustine called "The Gospel in the Gospel." Read it with care, and you see four distinct types or varieties of the "lost." We shall take them one by one. Today let us thank God that He is ever seeking and saving that which was lost, in any way, and in any place.

We give thanks to Thee, O God of love, that no one can ever be lost from Thy sight, Thy love, Thy watchful care. Still are we Thine, O God, though we wander and sin and lose ourselves in ways of folly and shame. Help us never to lose Thee, O God, nor to slight or forget Thy steadfast love, but ever to live in the consciousness of Thine eternal goodness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
LUKE 15:3–7.

Perhaps Jesus put first this picture of what it means to be "lost," because it is so common a variety. The sheep that has wandered away is not wicked, or depraved. It is uncertain, uneasy, in danger; it cannot find the way back. It calls, and no one answers.

There are many today who are lost as the sheep was. They are not depraved, wicked, abandoned. But they have lost the way and cannot find it. They are uncertain, uneasy, in doubt and danger.

The Good Shepherd is always seeking such. A guide in the mountains once said to a party starting to climb, "If you lose your way, sit down, keep calling, and wait for some one to find you."

There is Some One Who will hear us and find us, if we, when lost in doubt and uncertainty, will keep calling.

O Saviour of the world, Who by Thy cross and precious blood, has redeemed us, hear us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK, MONDAY

Read
LUKE 15:8–10.

Not all are lost as the sheep was. Some are more like the coin. The coin was not wicked or depraved, any more than the sheep was. Nor was it uneasy and worried. But it was out of use. It had rolled into a corner, and there it lay.

Made to be used, to be kept in circulation, to provide food and comfort and joy to its holder, it was out of the way, useless.

There are lives like that. Made to be of use, to fit into life, to minister to joy and comfort and the ongoing of human life, they have somehow become detached, in a corner, out of touch.

Christ came to save such; and it is part of the business of His people and His Church to "reattach the detached," to help bring a Kingdom of God where each shall have his place, and no one shall be "lost."

Forgive us, O God, that we care so little and do so little for those who are crowded out, pushed aside, left behind, in a world strongly dominated by selfish strength. May we truly catch the spirit of our Master, and follow Him in seeking and saving those who are out of touch with life; in His name we pray. AMEN.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
LUKE 15:11–24.

This parable has given a name to the chapter, and a meaning to the word "lost." Here we find one who is to be blamed, not merely to be pitied. Here is misery and unhappiness, caused not by misfortune, but by wilfulness and sin.

And here note the significance of the fact that no one seeks him. The shepherd seeks the sheep, the woman seeks the coin; but the father waits; the lost son must change, face life differently, come back of his own accord. Here repent-

ance conditions salvation. Where sin enters and controls, repentance must come before restoration. The sinner must "come to himself" and say, "I have sinned," before the life can be set right in the father's home. God cannot seek and save one who sets his will against the love that seeks to save.

Most holy and merciful Father, Thou alone knowest how often we have sinned; in wandering from Thy ways; in wasting Thy gifts; in forgetting Thy love. But Thou, O Lord, have pity upon us, who are ashamed and sorry for all wherein we have displeased Thee. Teach us to hate our errors; cleanse us from our secret faults; and forgive our sins; for the sake of Thy dear Son, our Saviour. And, O most holy and loving Father, send Thy purifying grace into our hearts, we beseech Thee, that we may henceforth live in Thy light and walk in Thy ways; according to the commandments of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"He came to himself." LUKE 15:17.

Doubtless he thought he was coming to himself when he took his money and went his own way. Up to that time he had been under restraint; now he has the opportunity for "self-expression." He can live his own life, and be his own master.

But he truly "came to himself" only when he faced the facts, saw where his way of life was tending, and resolutely went back where he knew he belonged.

Many in our day are impatiently seeking self-realization by throwing off restraints, and doing as they please. Well for them, and for all of us, when we truly "come to our-

selves," and come back to God in Whom we live, and move, and have our being.

O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee. By the grace of Thy good Spirit help us to see ourselves and life and all things in their true light; and to know that when we turn away from Thee we are leaving the joy for which we were made. And this we ask in the name of Jesus. AMEN.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
LUKE 15:18, 21.

"Father, I have sinned."

He might have said something else. Most men and women do. They offer various excuses for their godless lives.

This boy might have said, "I was brought up so strictly that I reacted." Or, "I was given too much freedom when I was young." Or, "I had bad companions, who led me astray." Or, "I had too much money." Or, "I couldn't stand that elder brother of mine." And it might all have been true in a way.

But so long as he went on excusing himself by such pleas, he could not find his way back. When he swept aside all such attempts at self-justification and said, "I have sinned" —then the way opened back to his father's house.

O Spirit of truth and justice, spare me not, I beseech Thee. Beat down all the defences I erect to keep out the shameful truth about myself and my sin. Set my iniquities before me, and help me to see them as they are; that I may turn from

them unto Thee, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience. Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. AMEN.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
LUKE 15:25–30.

It has often been said that in this wonderful chapter we find three kinds of lost lives. But that view misses the gravest of all, and ignores the very climax of the chapter.

Jesus told these parables in protest against the spirit of the Pharisees. And it is their very spirit which He embodies in the hateful figure of the elder brother. There he stands, bitterly critical of his brother's sin, utterly unconscious of any fault in himself, unloving, censorious, as fully out of touch with the generous, loving spirit of the father and his home as ever his brother was when off in the far country.

It is a warning to the upright, the respectable, the self-satisfied, everywhere. Such a spirit is utterly foreign to the Spirit of God, as revealed in Christ. Let us, who pride ourselves on our goodness, beware lest the publicans and harlots enter into the Kingdom of God before us.

We praise Thee, O God, that Thy grace can save not only from coarse sins, but from the subtle, hidden, corroding vices of self-righteousness, hardness, and a censorious tongue and temper. From these sins and faults deliver us, O Lord; that we may have that humble and contrite heart in which Thou art at home. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
LUKE 15:30, 32.

"This, thy son." "This, thy brother."

The elder son was willing and eager to disclaim all relationship with, or responsibility for, the boy who had wandered and come back. Pointing to him with indignation and contempt, he called him, "This, thy son." Let the father claim him if he would.

But the father gently set him right. Pointing to the son who had come back, he called him, "This, thy brother."

Do not we at times talk glibly and easily about the great truth that all are the children of God, forgetting that that makes them our brothers? We pray to God for "These, Thy children." Will He not say to us, "Do not forget that they are your brothers?"

O God, in our hearts we know that one is our Father and all we are brethren. Yet daily we deny in our acts what we profess in our prayers. Create in us loving hearts, O God, and renew a brotherly spirit within us; that we may love Thee in our brethren, and our brethren in Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
LUKE 15:11–32.

Read again this wonderful story. What figure in it stands out most clear and beautiful? Not the one son, or the

other; but the father, who is just and generous and kind to all.

Such should be our spirit always. Often we are tried and vexed at the same types of character and conduct with which this father had to deal. On the one hand is the careless, wasteful, improvident, reckless character; on the other, the smug, sanctimonious, self-righteous, cold-blooded character. We so easily lose patience with them both, especially if we are engaged in religious or social welfare work.

Then we should read this story, and watch the father, as he deals patiently with them both. Such should be our spirit.

O God our Father, help us ever to hear the voice that calls to us to be perfect as Thou art perfect. Enable us, by that grace which comes through companionship with Thee, to be kind to the unthankful and the evil, even as Thou art; to love even the unlovely, as Thou dost; and in all our ways to grow to be like Thee. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK, MONDAY

"Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness." LUKE 16:9.

Through all that is uncertain or doubtful in the interpretation of this difficult parable, shines out this beautiful truth (which is perhaps all that Jesus meant to teach us here) that the best use of money and material resources is for the making, remaking, or improvement of people. Only that which makes a difference in men and women and children lasts into eternity. Other investments disappear or disap-

point. But what we do for the development and encouragement, for the joy and culture, of the individual lives of people lasts forever. Here is the best use, the surest investment, of all that we possess.

O God of all, keep us from thinking lightly of money, of resources, of possessions. May we so desire to bring out their true and high values that we shall seek only the best investments and uses of them, in the characters and lives of those whom we can influence. And this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
LUKE 16:27–31.

It was natural in Jesus' day, it is still natural in ours, to think that some great sign, some wonder, would most powerfully act to produce faith in God. Even so wise a man as Charles Darwin, when asked what would convince him of the reality of the Unseen, spoke of angelic visitors.

To all people of every age who seek after signs and wonders as proofs of God, comes the quiet, irresistibly wise word of Jesus, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." A few weeks later, His words came true. One rose from the dead, only to be greeted with doubt and disbelief.

"And not for signs in heaven above,
Or earth beneath, they look,
Who know with John His smile of love,
With Peter His rebuke.

In joy of inward peace, or sense
Of sorrow over sin,
He is His own best evidence,
His witness is within."

FORTY-THIRD WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" LUKE 18:8.

All through the long ages, devout men and women have looked and longed and prayed for the second coming of Christ. They have felt that that would set all things right.

But our Lord Himself, in this searching question, clearly implies that the power and success of His Coming would depend on the faith He found here in the hearts of His people. The critical question is not when He shall come, nor even whether He shall come; but on what He finds when He comes.

He has come, again and again, in new openings, fresh opportunities, clearer visions; and there has not been faith enough to carry to completion the possibilities that were there. It is the privilege of every Christian to provide in his own life a nucleus of that faith without which the Lord's coming will be of no avail.

O merciful Father, Whose blessed Son was lifted up, that He might draw all men unto Him, take away, we beseech Thee, from all who profess to be His disciples, whatever hinders the spread of His Kingdom. Arouse the indifferent, lift up the fallen, strengthen the weak-hearted, bring back the wanderers, enlighten the ignorant, make the Gospel of Thy Son known throughout the world; and quicken in all

who bear the name of Christian that faith which is the victory that overcomes the world. AMEN.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 20:1–16.

"It is my will to give unto this last even as unto thee."

There is more in this parable than lies on the surface, as the keen insight of Ruskin detected. There is a hint here of a sort of justice that is needed all through our economic life. Those who worked only one hour had been willing to work all day, waiting to work all day. They deserved pay for the full day.

Principles and ideals are dimly discerned here which economists and leaders of industry must take into account. Somehow a way must be found whereby the man who is willing to work can be sure of a livelihood. Until that is done no social or industrial order can rightfully claim to be Christian.

O God, forgive us for our failure to build a world in which justice shall be done to all according to the mind of Christ. Sweep away the subterfuges behind which we take refuge, and keep us face to face with the bitter facts of poverty and unemployment and social injustice until in our hearts is kindled the burning zeal of the Son of Man to right the wrongs of all the children of God. In His name. AMEN.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 20:14, 15.

Two men come up to this parable, seeking guidance from Jesus as to the conduct of business. One of them reads of

how the lord of the vineyard gave to the late comer the same wages as to the early worker, and catches an inspiration to a large-hearted and generous recognition of equality of reward. The other hears the Master of the vineyard say, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" and feels that he has the approval of Jesus in running his business as he will, regardless of the views of his employees.

What an illustration of the great, sublime, arresting truth that Jesus comes to us not to give rules, or to solve our problems, but to present ideals, and sting our consciences into action. Only a soul saturated with the spirit of Jesus can be trusted to find here the Christian way of handling the hard matter of industrial justice. There is nothing superficial about the Christian way. We must walk with Christ every step, if we would take any step rightly.

Lord, forgive us if ever we feel that there is some easy way of following Thee. Free us from such thoughts. And set and keep our whole hearts and lives in Thy way, that in full and ever-growing fellowship with Thee we may find our judgment growing more just, and our will becoming more and more conformed to the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. For Thy name's sake. AMEN.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 20:17–21.

How lonely Jesus must have been! No one seemed capable of understanding Him. He takes His choicest friends and followers apart, and tells them of the suffering, the sacrifice, the death, that await Him. And they under-

stand Him so little that two of them, with their mother to plead for them, come to ask the chief seats in His Kingdom. The plainest of words fell on their minds and made no impression.

So it has been down through the centuries. Christ has been telling men of love, of sacrifice, of humbleness, of unselfishness; and they have talked and prayed and worked as if the main concern was place and power and ease and honour. He has called them to take up the cross, and they have fought to see who should wear a crown, or carry a crozier.

When will come the time that He "shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied?"

Lord of all Christians, forgive me that I do not think Thy thoughts after Thee, or look at life with the mind of Christ; forgive me that still my heart is set on the honours and emoluments of the world. Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the deep meaning of Thy passion and death, and the glory of Thy self-sacrifice, and may be inspired by the vision of that glory to follow Thee even if it mean the carrying of a cross. AMEN.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 20:20–23.

There is then in this universe one realm in which no privileges are to be obtained by pull or favour. Not even the Master can give the places of honour to favourites of His. The honours must go to those who win them. If any is to be great it must be the one whom God counts great, the one whose life entitles him to that recognition.

It is refreshing in a world where so much goes by favour, to realize that in God's service all goes by just desert. Refreshing? Yes, but sobering. Let my position, my family, my place in the church, even my standing as a Christian, be what it may, nothing counts but the quality of my service, the sincerity of my loyalty, the reality of my following. God help me to remember that every day.

Lord, let not worldly ambition, or desire for recognition, or any form of self-seeking, find a place in my heart, or enter as a motive into my service of Thee. Keep me truly loyal, desirous only of fellowship with Thee, careless of where the honours go if only I may walk with Thee, and live with Thee, and be drawn at every step into closer, dearer comradeship with Thee. AMEN.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 20:24–28.

With what divine simplicity Jesus sets forth great principles of action toward which the whole world's life must tend if ever it would be right! More and more have men found it true that real greatness means service. Where once kings lorded it over the people, now presidents and rulers are regarded as "the servants of the people." The man who can serve best is most sure of honour and authority. The business house that can best serve the real interests of the public is most sure of steady and permanent success.

Jesus knows. There is no wisdom like His. How foolish we are to doubt Him or to question His judgments! There is in Him a perfect wisdom to which men must come; and

the sooner they take His yoke and learn of Him the sooner will their dreams of a perfect social order come true.

O God, Who hast called us to be perfect even as Thou art perfect, and that not alone in individual character, but in the corporate and common life, grant us meekly and gladly to follow Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, finding in Him the wisdom of God, and knowing well that when we walk in His way we shall not stumble, but shall surely find that path of the just that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. AMEN.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 20:25–28.

"Even as the Son of Man."

Christians have had, naturally and rightly, so exalted an idea of the uniqueness of the sacrifice of Christ in His death that they have tended to see Him on the cross in lonely isolation. They have left Calvary to Him.

But, as a famous New Testament scholar once declared, there is not a reference to the cross in the Gospels which does not hold it up for the disciple no less than for the Master.

See how that view shines out from this text. Jesus speaks of how He came to give His life a ransom for many. But He speaks of it as illustrating a general ideal for all the children of God. "Even as," He says. We are to sacrifice, to serve, to give the life, even as He did.

That is our ideal, high, stern, impossible save for the grace of God. God give us grace to make it truly our ideal.

O Saviour of the World, Who didst bear Thy cross for us and for all, help us to take up our cross daily and follow Thee. O Thou Who wast lifted up for us and for all, lift us up with Thee. Help us not to shrink from following where Thou dost lead; grant us not to be afraid to enter into the fellowship of Thy cross. AMEN.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 21:1–12.

It was a momentous time for Jesus when He rode into Jerusalem. But He rode straight to the temple. Religion meant so much to Him that He would let no other interest take precedence of it. The temple worship was wrong; would He therefore stay away, content to criticize? No; He would go in, and do His best to set it right. If things were wrong, let religion first be set right.

Our troubled and distracted times would be in better shape if more Christians did as Jesus did. So many of us are indifferent, critical, content to stand aside and find fault.

If Christians would go bravely and self-sacrificingly into the church as Jesus went into the Temple, sure that the first step in a right community is right religion, there would be good hope of rightful order and progress.

O Lord, Who in Thy righteous zeal didst, as on this day, cast out the profaners of Thy Father's House, enter with power into the temple of our heart and cleanse it, that we may then follow Thee into the House of God and help to make it worthy of the name it bears. AMEN.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read

MARK 11:15–18.
"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations."

It is inspiring to find that one element in the zeal that fired our Lord's heart and moved Him to indignant action on that day in the Temple was His interest in people of all nations and races. It was in the Court of the Gentiles that the priests had set up their tables and stalls. Jesus wanted all men to draw near to God in His house without discrimination; and He was indignant at the spirit that would neglect or belittle their right to worship.

The church of all times has been too ready to make room for the people and the forces that pride themselves on their exclusiveness, nationalistic, social, theological, or some other. The Master, we may be sure, still wants His church to be a House of prayer for all people.

O God, Who hast made of one all nations of the world, and dost call them to Thyself without regard to any of the differences that too often hold Thy children apart, fill us with a holy desire for the coming of Thy Church Universal, wherein men and women of all races and groups may find themselves at home, and where the children of the world may find that which they instinctively seek, even the presence of the Eternal. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
LUKE 19:45–48.

"My house shall be a house of prayer."

Every word that Jesus uttered is significant; sometimes in a word that seems purely incidental we find a golden thought.

"My house shall be a house of *prayer*."

So often, in our Protestant churches, we slight this part of our worship. We concentrate attention on the sermon, or on the music; but the prayer is careless, slovenly, wearisome, or in some way uninspiring.

In the ancient Directory for Worship prepared by the Westminster divines, ministers are cautioned "not to make their sermons so long as to interfere with the more important duties of prayer and praise."

There speaks the mind of Christ. Let all take heed who minister in His name.

We will go into Thy house, O God, in the multitude of Thy mercies; and in Thy fear will we worship toward Thy holy temple. Hear the voice of our supplications when we cry unto Thee. We have thought of Thy loving-kindness, O Lord, in the midst of Thy temple. Let thine eyes be open, and let Thine ears be attentive unto the prayers which Thy servants offer in this, Thy holy place; for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son. AMEN.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 21:15–17.

It is going quite too far when we say that "the voice of the people is the voice of God," meaning by that to ascribe authority to the cry of the crowd.

But Jesus was right when He found encouragement and endorsement such as His soul welcomed in the spontaneous, innocent approval of the simple throng and especially of the children. God does speak through the true, deep instincts of the mass of people as He does not through the voices of the leaders. Had the common folk had the power to decide, there would have been no war in 1914.

Jesus welcomed the spontaneous outspeaking of the throng. So will the true Christian, the true leader, the true soul everywhere. Giving full weight, as we should, to the evil power of propaganda, we may yet be very sure that when we reach the natural verdict of the common people, we are nearest to the truth.

"When wilt Thou save the people;
O God of mercy, when?
The people, Lord, the people;
Not thrones and lords, but men.

God save the people! Thine they are,
Thy children, as Thine angels fair.
From vice, oppression, and despair,
God, save the people!"

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 21:28–32.

Here is a saying that stings our consciences, and summons us to severe self-judgment.

For it has always been so easy, is so easy today, to be content with professions, with lip service. We say to ourselves, and perhaps openly to others, that we are going to do what we know we ought to do. But somehow we put off the doing. We are like the band of police in "The Pirates of Penzance," who keep singing "We go, We go," while their leader answers in exasperation, "Yes, but you *don't go.*"

God keep us from being content with saying, "We go, Sir," and then sitting still. For the test, the only test the Master will regard as sufficient, is still the doing of the will of God.

> "And we remember still
> The word, and from Whom it came;
> 'Not he that repeateth the Name,
> But he that doeth the will.'"

O Lord, open our eyes that we may have a clear and uninterrupted sight of all the wonderful things which Thou hast done for us. Let us not live as if we were strangers to Thy commandments. Infuse into our hearts such a holy fear of displeasing Thee, and such eager desire to do Thy will, that nothing may seduce us from quick and glad obedience. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 21:33–44.

All through the ages, nation after nation has counted itself the chosen people, "God's Country," the favoured race.

If ever any race or nation had a right to claim that privileged position, it was Israel. Yet Jesus, with His clear vision, had to warn them that other peoples and races would take the place they had failed to fill, that "the Kingdom of God would be given to the nation that should bring forth the fruits thereof."

May our favoured land and people heed the warning. The Kingdom of God, the favoured lot, the privileged position, does not belong to the Anglo-Saxons, to the white races, to any one group. It belongs, and will be given, to the race, the nation, the people that comes nearest to doing the will of God. From that law there is no escape.

O God, Whose Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, preserve us and our government and nation from evil ambition or pride, and from overweening trust in our own goodness and greatness. Save us from all national sins and faults which expose us to Thy heavy judgments, from unbelief and profaneness, from injustice and oppression, from a careless and worldly spirit, and from all that is displeasing to Thee; that we may not by our sins bring trouble and loss to our nation, but may build it up in righteousness and peace; that glory may dwell in our land continually. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 22:1–10.

Here shines out the great truth, which we too easily forget, that God is not dependent on any particular set of people for the outworking of His Kingdom. He will not fail, if America fail, or the white race, or the present church. His Kingdom will come, if there are any people on earth who will do His holy will; and He can work out His great world purpose better through the humblest, most despised and down-trodden people, who will take His way and do His will, than through the most proud, cultured, favoured races on earth, who turn from His way and neglect His will. We, of the proud races, need to remember that solemn and inexorable fact.

"Lord God of hosts, be with us yet;
Lest we forget; Lest we forget."

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 22:11–14.

Here is a needed warning for those who say, often with open satisfaction, that so long as the heart is right, the outside does not matter. How often we hear remarks like these (and how well they sound): "It doesn't matter what religion one professes, if he is only sincere"; "If a man lives up to the light he has, that is all that is necessary"; "What counts is the faith in the heart, not membership in the

church"; "The important thing is to be right with God inwardly, rather than to pray."

So the sayings run. There is a great truth below them all. But there is a serious fallacy also in them all. For it is our business to give God the maximum, not the minimum; to add outward profession to inward faith, and prayer to heart belief, and the right manner and form to the right inward state.

That is the meaning of this man who was found wanting for lack of the proper garment. Our easy-going age needs this lesson.

O God, we are glad that, while man looketh on the outward appearance, Thou dost look upon the heart. But deliver us, we pray, from indifference or slovenliness in the outward appearance. Help us ever to clothe our heart's religion in the best, richest, and worthiest form; that we may honour Thee, and not be put to shame in Thy presence. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 22:15–22.

What a wonderful help it would be to us, if, in answer to their question, Jesus had given a specific and authoritative ruling on the troublesome question of the relative authority of conscience and the state. The state says that no man is fit to be a citizen unless he will agree to bear arms at his country's bidding, even against his own conscience. Our religion says that no authority must be enthroned above the voice of God in conscience. Where lies the right course?

Note that, confronted with a form of this general question,

Jesus laid down no absolute rule. He said that we should give to the state what belongs to it and to God what belongs to Him. But how can we decide? What belongs to the one or to the other? The Master leaves that, where it must be left, to each individual conscience, in the sight of God. No one, not even Christ, can take that responsibility from us, or bear it for us.

O God, let not the inner light be darkness in my soul. Keep my conscience sensitive to the issues of right and wrong. Keep me free from mere stubbornness or self-assertiveness. May I never confuse my prejudices with Thy good and gracious will. But give me courage to do and say the right, whatever comes of it; that I may be worthy to be called by the name of Thy Son, Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 22:23–33.

Here comes a group of religious leaders. They are befogged about practical issues and fundamental beliefs. But the One to Whom they come is clear and serene.

Why the difference?

Jesus puts His finger on the real issue: "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God?"

They read the Bible, and studied it; but they did not *know* it. They did not get at the heart of it. Nor did they really know God and the working of His nature and power.

Here is the basis for right assurance: knowledge of the Bible, and knowledge of God. If we have full, free, honest,

deep acquaintance with God and His Word we shall find our way with certainty, and walk without stumbling through the dark forest of life.

O Thou Who art the true sun of the world, Who by Thy most wholesome appearing dost nourish and make joyful all things, we beseech Thee mercifully and favourably to shine into our hearts that, the night and darkness of sin and the mists of error being driven away, Thou brightly shining within our hearts, we may, all our life long, go without any stumbling or offence, and may walk as in the daytime, being pure and clean from the works of darkness, and abounding in all good works which Thou hast prepared for us to walk in. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 22:23–33.

Every time Jesus uses the Bible, or quotes from it, we are impressed with the fresh, free, vivid way He handles it. We feel very sure that were He here today, He would feel at home among those who welcome all possible light upon it, and spend no time or energy defending special theories or ideas of its mechanical precision. Now, as in the days of His flesh, He would approve those who use it most faithfully, freely, and open-mindedly, with no trace of magic or superstition in their view or use of it. May we be comrades of His bold, childlike, independent spirit, searching the Scriptures as He did, that we may find there the truth that makes us free.

In times of doubt and questing, when our minds are perplexed by new learning, new thought, new teaching; when our faith is strained by creeds, by doctrines, by mysteries beyond our understanding; give us the faithfulness of learners and the courage of believers; give us boldness to examine and faith to trust all truth; patience and insight to master difficulties; stability to hold fast our sacred traditions with enlightened interpretations, to admit with gladness all fresh truth made known to us, and to grasp new knowledge and combine it loyally and honestly with the old. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 22:34–40.

It is highly significant that this great first commandment of love to God, in its original form specifies "heart, soul, and strength"; but when it emerges in the New Testament the words "and with all thy *mind*" are added.

Whether Jesus introduced this new note, or used it as others had done, it is significant that He quoted a commandment with the *mind* added. He would have no obscurantist love of God; no religion that left the intellect out, or feared the light of fact. His was and is the ideal caught by Frederick W. Robertson in his great words: "to dare to gaze on the splendor of naked truth, without putting a false veil before it, to confuse people with mystery and vagueness." We must walk in the light if we are to follow Him.

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell,

That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,
But vaster."

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 22:34–40.

It was nothing new to give us the "First Commandment of all" the ancient call to love God. But Jesus showed His originality and deep knowledge of the Old Testament religion, by adding always a second commandment, without which the first would be incomplete, love to one's neighbour. An obscure saying in the book of Leviticus—perhaps the only word that glorifies that dreary and detailed exposition of legal requirements now dead and gone—the Master lifted out and set as a gem.

Since that time, no one has been able to separate the two commandments. "What God hath joined, let no man put asunder."

And let no one bearing the name of Christian forget that to the mind of the Master love to man was an essential part of the fundamental law of religion, without which no one can truly love God.

O blessed Lord, we beseech Thee to pour down upon us such grace as may not only cleanse this life of ours, but beautify it a little, if it be Thy will, before we go hence and are no more seen. Grant that we may love Thee with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourself, and that we may persevere unto the end; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 22:41–46.

Here is clear evidence that Jesus thought of Himself as something more than a man. He would not even be known as David's Son. If a blind man out of a crowd, or singing children in the street, hailed Him as "Son of David," He would not rebuke them. But in His heart He knew, and He would have these religious leaders understand, that He was more than the descendant of the greatest of their kings. He was Lord even of David.

In any other it would have been colossal egotism. In Jesus it is sublime. For there is no other name to which His Name must bow. He alone is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

O God, the heavens declare Thy glory; and we praise Thee for the wonder of our present knowledge of the majestic sweep of Thy universe in which Thy greatness is made clear. But, we beseech Thee, help us to see and know that Thy greater glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ; that in that revelation in a human life greater glory shines than in all the splendour of the sky; for in Him, O God, we know Thee as Thou art, and meet Thee as a Friend. Thanks be to Thee, O God, for this Thine unspeakable gift. AMEN.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 23.

Some have been made uneasy by this outbreak of caustic criticism on the part of Jesus; as if here His love and kindness broke down, and He gave way to anger and vituperation.

But nowhere is there a clearer revelation than just here of the great fact that in Him love was (and is) more than amiability, or good nature. The intensity of His love for God, for goodness, for the best in man, made Him incapable of weak approval or tolerance of what was contrary to the nature of God and of goodness, and of what was best in man.

But let no one of us find here a warrant for fault finding or condemnation on our part. Wait until you are as pure and sound and free from self-seeking as Jesus, before you indulge in censure. "Let him that is without sin cast the stone." The One Who was without sin may cast stones you and I would not dare handle.

O God, in Thy great mercy preserve me from the temptation to set myself as a judge over others, or to let loose upon them my indignation and censure. Make it very clear to me, O God, that I must have a long and patient schooling in Christliness before I dare indulge in unsparing condemnation. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 23:5–7, 25, 26.

Here is one of the chief accusations Jesus makes against the Pharisees—that they *live on the outside*. Once more we find Him emphasizing inwardness. To use one's religion as a means of getting recognition from men, rather than as a means of serving and worshipping God, is a hideous prostitution of a holy thing.

Who of us does not need the warning? The more religious

our life is in outward form, the greater the need of care lest we be content with the outside and leave the inside to dwindle and decay. How we need to "guard the fire within"!

O Thou, Who art the Light of the minds that know Thee, the Life of the souls that love Thee, and the strength of the thoughts that seek Thee, help us so to know Thee that we may truly love Thee, so to love Thee that we may fully serve Thee, Whose service is perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 23:8–10.

Here is true democracy, as it works in the Kingdom of God, and should work in the Christian Church. There must be teachers, and Masters. But all, whether teacher or pupil, are to be brothers; and all are to have but one Father, and one Master; all are to be brothers in God the Father, and Christ, the One Lord and Master.

Strange, over against these clear commands, to see church men loving titles, and priests choosing to be called "Father." Strange too on the other hand, to see the Humanist as some one has described him, "believing that all men are brothers, but that they have no father!"

The nearer we can come to this state which Christ commands, a state of simple fellowship, where the only competition for rank is in the matter of which can serve the most, the more ideal will be the church or the country.

O God, Who hast taught us that we draw near to Thee most truly not when we exalt ourselves, but when we humble

ourselves, help us to care not at all about honours and rank, but to care supremely for fellowship and joyous service; that thus we may be true companions of Thy blessed Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 23:23–25.

Always, in the long process of the development of religion, there has gone on a struggle between form and spirit, the outward practice and the inward experience.

In this little passage our Lord clearly shows their true relationship. Pointing to the inward matters of the spirit, "justice, mercy, and faith," He says, "These ye ought to have done." *These* must be cared for, whether anything else is or not.

Yet He is not content with this judgment. He shows His perfect balance by pointing to the outer matters, of worship, giving, faithful regulation of conduct, and saying, "These ye ought not to leave undone." The inward is the primary, supreme in importance; but the outward should not be neglected.

Thank God for a Leader so exquisite in His balanced judgment.

O Lord, increase in us faith and devotion; replenish our hearts with all goodness and by Thy great mercy keep us in the same. Give us godly zeal in prayer, faithfulness in worship, true humility in prosperity, perfect patience in adversity, and continual joy in the Holy Spirit; even for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 23:29–32.

These men were congratulating themselves on a goodness which was wholly imaginary. How different they would have been had they lived in earlier days! So they fondly imagined. Jesus punctures their pride, and shows them that they are doing even as their fathers had done.

It is so easy to think that, had we lived in ancient times, we would have lived so much nobler and better lives. Imaginary goodness is easy—and debilitating.

Do not dream of what you might have been, had you lived in the past. Face the facts of your own day; play your part now. That is what God asks of you.

We bless Thee, O God, for the lives of all Thy saints, that inspire us to emulate their holy example. We bless Thee, too, for the warnings that come to us from lives that made shipwreck out of their great possibilities. In the light of the past may we be watchful and ready to face our own problems and fight our own battles. Help us to live in deeds, not dreams, and to serve Thee well in this our day and place; through the grace that is in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 23:37–39.

Unsparing and severe as is the censure and condemnation voiced in this chapter, it ends with a note of pity and compassion. No word from Jesus could end in any other tone.

One is reminded of the sudden change from minor to major in the final chord of a Bach chorale or fugue.

Always, beneath the severest rebuke, must lie the love that longs to save. So it was with the Master. So it must be with the disciple.

> "Not Thine the bigot's frenzied plea,
> Not Thine the zealot's ban;
> Thou well canst spare a love of Thee
> That ends in hate of man."

Only love so deep can venture to censure so strongly.

O God, Thou art love! Help us not to bask in the sunlight of that great truth, as if in it were license to live as we would. Help us to know that the very depth and greatness of Thy love makes Thy glance the more intolerable when we sin lightly or deliberately; that Thy loving-kindness will not rest while we are in any way not conformed to Thy holy will in Christ Jesus. In His name we pray. AMEN.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 24:1, 2; 26:26, 28.

When men would establish a permanent memorial, they make it of stone.

Yet it crumbles in time, and is gone.

Jesus pointed to the Temple, and declared that not one stone would be left upon another. And it was so.

But on that same night Jesus took two fragile, perishable things, bread and wine, and made of them His memorial. And that memorial has lasted through the ages. No one can

foresee a time when it will have ceased. For it lives in human lives and acts.

That which is built into human life outlasts the costliest and most stupendous pile of marble or steel. Let me not forget that truth.

O Almighty God, Who having begun a good work in us, wilt perform it into the day of Christ Jesus, grant that our love may abound more and more in knowledge and all judgment; that we may approve things that are excellent; that we may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. AMEN.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 24:3–6.

In telling His disciples of the spirit and attitude they should have in the face of hard and adverse conditions, Jesus tells all His followers, in every age, how to meet hard facts.

"See," He says, "but do not be troubled." So the verse should read: "See; but do not be troubled." It is like Browning's great call, "Trust God! See all, nor be afraid." There are some who "see all," and are frightened.

There are some who keep from fear by refusing to open their eyes and face the facts.

But the true spirit always is this of Jesus: *"See;* but do not *fear."*

In that spirit let us face all the hard facts of life.

O God our Father, the source of all wisdom, understanding and true strength, look in mercy upon Thy servants, and

send Thy Holy Spirit into their hearts, that when they must fight for the glory of Thy holy name, then, being strengthened with the defence of Thy right hand, they may bravely stand, and fearlessly face what life may bring; and may continue in that good heart and steadfast courage unto the end. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 24:3–14.

We are apt to say, when things go from bad to worse, and there is no light to cheer the gloom, "Well, this is the end."

That is not the way Jesus faced life. Here He is, a few hours only before His death, clearly foreseeing evil days of agony for His nation, and for the world. His eyes are open to the facts; He evades nothing.

But, after setting forth the hard and bitter experiences that are coming, He adds, "the end is not yet." At last He says, "then, shall the end come." When? When God's will is done; when the Gospel shall have made its way all over the earth. The end will come only when God has His way.

It is our blessed right, as Christians, never to despair, but to know that, however black and bitter things may be, the end will be God's victory.

O God, hope deferred doth indeed make the heart faint. By Thy grace keep us courageous and patient, never despairing, because we know that Thy holy and loving will is ruling in all the affairs of life, and Thou wilt make all things work together for good. Help us to be true followers of them that through faith and patience inherit the promises. For Thy name's sake. AMEN.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 24:23–27.

This counsel, specifically given to guide the followers of Christ in the "last days," is based on a principle that works every day.

Jesus says, Do not let others decide for you; let God bring to your own heart the truth you need. Do not rely on the views and experiences of other people. What does God say to *you?*

It is a wholesome principle, and a needed warning. Let us gather all the wisdom we can, welcoming light from any quarter. But no man is safe or right until his conduct is squarely based on his own conscience and judgment, in the light that comes from God, and from his own honest estimate of the facts. For such inner authority of the conscience and of right reason there is, and can be, no substitute.

O God, make clean our heart within us; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from us. Let not the light that is in us become darkness. Suffer us not to tamper with reason or conscience or with the plain facts of life, or with the revelations of Thy Holy Word. Send out Thy light and Thy truth. Let them lead us to Thee and to Thy holiness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 24:32, 33.

Once more the lesson comes to us, this time in a parable. Times of severe trial, of persecution, of agony, of distress

of body and mind, are apt to seem to us the winter of the soul. Jesus says they are rather like the spring. The pains are growing pains; the pressure is that of the sap in the dry branches, swelling them to bursting, that the new buds may come out into blossom, with the promise of fruit.

What a wonder and glory to be followers of a religion of incorrigible hope! "Weeping may tarry for the night; but joy cometh in the morning." Jesus' resurrection is more than a fact of history; it is a sublime parable of life. Always the good lies beyond the bitter.

> "Expect the best! It lies not in the past.
> God ever keeps the good wine to the last.
> Beyond are richer toil and nobler rest;
> Expect the best!"

O God our Father, Thou art Lord not only of what is and what was, but of what is to be. Help us, by Thy grace, to walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil, knowing well that beyond the darkest experience lies light and life and love, because Thou art Lord of all, and Thou art our Father. Help us thus to walk on our way with faith unfaltering. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
LUKE 21:28–31.

It was springtime in Judea. But there was doubt and foreboding in the hearts of the little band of followers of Jesus. He was looking forward to death; He was prophesying gloomy days for the nation and the world. They had asked

for signs of His coming, and the signs He gave were calamities, wars, turmoil, distress, anguish.

But, with the sublime and incorrigible hopefulness of faith, He turned to the blessed springtime as a symbol of the spirit that should be in them. Look, said He, on these stirrings and convulsions as the swelling of the buds of promise, the stir of the sap in the trees. All these changes mean life, not death.

So should a Christian ever face dark and hard days. He knows, because He is sure of God the Father, that out of the darkness and dread and confusion God will bring a new world. So he lifts up his head and rejoices.

O Thou God of hope, fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope, through the power of Thy Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
LUKE 21:34–36.

While Jesus encouraged His followers to be hopeful in the face of hard times and bitter experiences, He warned them to see that their own spiritual equipment was sufficient to meet such tests. No Christian could afford to be negligent or idle in such crucial days. The confusion and trouble might be signs of spring; let the gardeners then be in the garden early and late, in season and out of season; for weeds grow fast in the springtime.

What a magnificent aim for one's whole life is in those closing words, "To stand before the Son of Man." If I can so live and so work that I shall be able at last to stand un-

ashamed in the presence of Christ, I shall have won the greatest prize life offers. Here is a Christian's life task in simplest terms.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy name; and finally, by Thy mercy, may stand in Thy presence glorified in likeness to Christ. In His name. AMEN.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK, TUESDAY

"Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away." MATTHEW 24:35.

How fleeting is a word! Spoken, written, printed, by the thousand million every day, how swiftly they fade into oblivion!

Yet what is there that lasts as does a true and inspired word? The words of Moses, the words of Plato, the words of Confucius, of Isaiah, of Buddha, of Paul, by these men still live. Out of the glory and grandeur of the ancient world nothing endures as does the *word*.

Jesus knew! He wrote nothing, left no directions for saving and publishing His sayings. He sent them forth, free as the wind and the light. And they have lived, and will live forever; and men and nations live by them today.

What a miracle is a true and living word! God help me, as a Christian, to speak some words that shall live on in the lives of those who hear.

"Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone."

Direct us, O Lord, in all our words and works, with Thy most gracious favour; and further us with Thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy name; and finally, by Thy mercy, may obtain everlasting life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 24:36.

In the face of this positive declaration, how foolish and vain, if not actually impious, appear all the efforts men have made down through the ages to set the time for the coming of the Lord, to predict the "end of the world."

There could not be a more unmistakable assertion than this—that no one but God knows when the "consummation of the age" will come. Not even Christ knew that. How then dare we try to set the time? Did He not expressly say, "It is not for you to know times and seasons, which the Father hath set in His own authority"?

It is our right and duty to live as Jesus lived, one day at a time, with the serene confidence that God will take care of the future, for us, and for all His children.

Lord, we know not what a day may bring forth. It frightens us, this appalling ignorance of what is to come, until we know Thee. Then we are glad that we know so little, and see but one step ahead. For, while we know not what lies beyond the bounds of this present moment, we know that it is good, for Thou art good, and Thou art there. The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. AMEN.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:1–13.

"Watch therefore."

Our Master is gracious; His watchword is Love; God is our Father; life is in His hand. Knowing all this, it is easy for us to slip into careless ways, forgetting that life is a stern affair, that it is easy to go wrong, and that eternal issues depend on each act of one's life.

We need again and again to turn to such passages as this that we may be reminded of the need of care and watchfulness. Gracious and loving as is our Lord, He does not fail to show us life as it is, and to warn us not to trifle with it. Let us hear and heed His loving, severe warnings.

Defend us, O Lord, against ourselves. Keep us from the sin and danger of carelessness. Thou hast warned us of the evil of worry. Help us to keep the narrow way of trust that lies between the extremes of thoughtlessness and the taking of anxious thought; that we may walk ever with Thee along the path of life that leads more and more into the country of eternal peace. AMEN.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:1–13.

In the reception room of one of our colleges for women there stood a marble group, representing one of the wise virgins turning away from one of the foolish ones, who was pleading for some of her oil.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, when he saw it, shook his head, and said, "She ought to have let her have some." It was the natural reaction of a kind heart.

But in fact the oil in the parable represents what cannot be given. The precious oil of a true experience of life with God is something each must gain for himself. If one has not found God, no one can give God to him. "I cannot give you the gold of truth," said Ruskin to a company of students; "I can only tell you where to dig."

God is not far from every one of us; but each must find Him for himself.

O God, Thy good gifts lie about us in rich profusion. The earth is full of Thy riches; and Thou givest us freely all things to enjoy. But the best things Thou hast set where we must search, if we would have them. Surely Thou art a God that hidest Thyself; yet our souls are restless until they rest in Thee. Help us to seek Thee earnestly, knowing well that then shall we find Thee, when we seek after Thee with all our heart. AMEN.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK, SATURDAY

"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." MATTHEW 25:21.

These words are often spoken at funeral services, to mark the end of a faithful life and the coming of a great reward.

But Jesus made them words spoken by a master to a servant who was right in the midst of his busy, active work. We should hear them as words coming to us from our Lord now, in the midst of our earthly life and work. They bid us enter into the joy Jesus had. What was His joy? Was it rest, glory, the bliss of heaven? It was the joy of service, of sacri-

fice, of adventure, of self-giving, of doing the will of God. Into that joy He calls us. And heaven itself has no greater satisfaction or happiness to offer than that.

O Giver of eternal joy, let me not envision Thee as standing afar off, at the gateway where my soul shall some day pass into the Silent Land. Let me see Thee close at hand, Thine eternal wisdom rejoicing ever in the works of Thy hands, Thy voice calling me to enter with Thee into the joy of creation, of conflict, of struggle, of bold adventure for the right and the good; for thereunto am I called in Thy gracious providence, even as was Thy Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:26, 27.

How natural and yet how wrong was the thought and action of this man of the one talent. "Too little," he thought, "to do much with. I shall only lose it, if I try some venture." So he hid it, to keep it safe.

But his lord showed him that there was a middle course which he should have taken. There were capable men, who might have handled his little capital, and brought in some return.

Thank God that there are spiritual bankers, who can help us to invest our little capacities safely yet productively. The five-talent men, or even the two-talent men may take the risks, and get the large returns. But I, mistrusting my capacity for independent ventures, can find, in the Church, or in some other of the numerous good spiritual ventures

started by men and women of vision, and carried on by men and women of wisdom, a means of investing what God has given me. Such "bankers" are all about us. No Christian need fail to win returns on the treasure God has given him, however small it be.

We bless Thee, O God, that Thou hast not left us to make our way alone, but hast called us into a goodly fellowship of love and service. In that companionship may we find both safety and stimulus, for the doing of Thy will. AMEN.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:14–39.

Note that the five-talent and two-talent men are commended, not for being brilliant and successful, but for being "good and faithful"; and that the one-talent man is blamed, not for being unfortunate and unsuccessful, but for being "wicked and slothful."

It is the motive, the spirit, that makes the difference. Indeed, we may venture to imagine another case, that of a man with one talent, or two, or five, who honestly did his best and failed. He would stand before his lord, ashamed and sorry, with empty hands, but with an honest confession of having tried. We know that his Lord would not blame him as he blamed the man who, through cowardice or indolence, had kept the talent safe. We serve a Master Whose praise is for the good and faithful; and in Whose eyes the only real failure is not to have tried. There are times when we need the comfort of that realization.

We thank Thee, O God, that Thou hast a place not only for those who succeed, but for the faithful failures. Help me to do my best every day, and in everything. Give me wisdom and courage and grace to succeed, if that may be. But above all, keep me good and faithful, and, if I fail, give me the joy of knowing in my heart that Thou knowest that I have tried. And this I ask in the name of the Christ of Calvary. AMEN.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:31–46.

There are few, if any, of the words of Jesus to which His followers should turn more frequently, than to this chapter. It warns us powerfully against dangers to which we are prone.

Here is that judgment scene to which the thought of Christians has been so strongly and so frequently directed. "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." How does He judge? What test or tests does He use?

Not orthodoxy; there is no hint of it. Not correctness of worship. Not even moral conduct.

Have you shown love? That is all. Have you helped people? Have you so lived as to make this earth a happier place for some people?

How that standard judges us! Who of us can meet that test? Who of us does not need to pray every day for the grace of Christ in our hearts, inspiring us to loving service?

O God, Who hast taught us to keep all Thy heavenly commandments by loving Thee and our neighbour, grant

us the spirit of peace and grace, that we may be both devoted to Thee with our whole heart, and united to each other with a pure will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:34, 41.

Notice that the blessed kingdom is "prepared" for the righteous "from the foundation of the world"; but the abode of darkness and loss was "prepared," not for any men, but "for the devil and his angels."

God has not prepared a hell for any men or women. What hell there is in the universe was set for the final disposition of incorrigible evil forces. No human being will go there save as by his life he makes such a place his natural and inevitable home. And Jesus here makes it clear that the only damning sin is the sin of selfishness—not loving and serving other people.

God will save every soul He can. But God cannot save a soul that will keep on in the way of selfishness.

O God, Who hast made us for great ends, that we might glorify Thee and enjoy Thee forever, keep us from contentment with a lower destiny, a less glorious end. Help us to be so faithful to high ideals amid simple duties that the glory of God shall ever shine in the common places of our life, and that we may enter into Thy joy anew each day. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:31–46.

There is a quaint mediæval tale of a man who, after living a selfish and godless life, found himself in hell. After a time he felt he could not stand it, and cried out for deliverance. A voice asked if he could recall any good deed or helpful service in his life. He searched his memory and answered, "I remember once giving a carrot to a starving donkey." Sometime later he saw a huge carrot let down from heaven, and heard a voice, "Lay hold on the carrot, and you may be saved." He seized the carrot and began to be drawn upward. But then many others ran to the place and began to take hold of the carrot and of the man, hoping thus to escape with him. He kicked and struggled and tried to push them back; and at last he cried, "Let go; this is *my* carrot." Instantly the carrot fell back into hell, and he with it.

The lesson is plain.

O Thou loving and tender Father in heaven, we confess before Thee in sorrow how hard and unsympathetic are our hearts; how often we have sinned against our neighbours by want of compassion and tenderness; how often we have neglected to help and visit them. O Father, forgive this our sin, and cleanse us from all taint of it; that we may be spotless in the day of Christ. AMEN.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:37, 38, 44.

Notice that the decisive test is not only deeds, but unconscious deeds. The righteous are surprised; they had not known that they had done these things. The wicked are surprised. They had not realized that they had neglected such opportunities.

It is by the deeds that are the instinctive and natural outcome of the spirit and heart within us that God will judge us. Let one prepare never so methodically by conscious doing of one good deed after another, and the Judge will surprise him by showing some deed or deeds, or some neglects and omissions, of which he was unconscious at the time, and say, "By these you are judged."

No one can be safe and sure save by having a heart wholly cleansed, a nature renewed, a life reborn, out of which shall come naturally the fruits of the Spirit of Christ.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a free spirit. Renew me in the whole man after Thine image, that I may perfectly serve Thee in every word and act. AMEN.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25.

Glance back over this whole chapter. What one sin stands out as most grave of all? It is *the sin of doing nothing.*

Look through the whole of our Lord's teaching, and you find the same emphasis. Robert Louis Stevenson expressed the judgment of Jesus when he said, "The only sins we need care much about are sins of omission."

Jesus drew one picture of a man in hell. What had he done? He had *not* done anything for the poor man at his gate. What had the foolish virgins done? They had *not* provided oil. What had the one-talent man *done? Nothing.* That was the ground of his condemnation. What had the wicked done, to be sent away so solemnly? "Inasmuch as ye did it *not.*"

Above all possible transgressions looms the sin of *not* doing what we know we ought to do.

O Lord our Saviour, Who hast warned us that Thou wilt require much of those to whom much is given, grant that we whose lot is cast in so goodly a heritage may strive the more abundantly by prayer, by alms giving, by loving service, and by every other means, to extend to others what we so richly enjoy; to the fulfilment of Thy holy will, and the eternal salvation of all Thy children. AMEN.

FIFTIETH WEEK, SUNDAY

"Before Him shall be gathered all the nations." MATTHEW 25:32.

It startles us to find in this judgment scene the word "nations." Is Christ then to judge nations, as well as individuals? Yes; every nation "must stand before the judgment seat of Christ." And the standard of judgment will be the same as for individuals. The nation that does not minister to other nations, play its full and serviceable part in the common life of humanity, and show a spirit of unselfish

concern for the general good, is a nation that has forgotten God; and the ancient verdict has never been reversed: "the nations that forget God shall be turned into hell." No nation can live and enjoy the favour of God save on these terms.

Our country needs our prayers.

Be merciful, O Lord, unto our sins, and grant us evermore as a nation to use the power and wealth Thou givest us to Thy glory, to the advancement of Thy Kingdom, and to the welfare of the world; seeking always the deliverance of the oppressed, and, as much as lieth in us, the good of all mankind. And this we ask in the name of the Prince of Peace. AMEN.

FIFTIETH WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:40.

There is set before us here not only a test to which we must submit, but a motive by which we may be inspired.

Tolstoi has developed it beautifully in his little Gospel Story, "Where Love is, there God is also."

There is transfiguring power in the thought that, when I am called on to minister to the repulsive, the unlovely, the unattractive, I am really ministering to the "altogether lovely," to the Christ Whom I adore, Who in some wonderful way identifies Himself with all the needy, even the surly and ungracious. I can do *for Him* what I would find hard or even impossible to do *for them*. Here is a motive that never fails, but springs up like a well of water unto everlasting life.

O God our Life, Who hast sent among us to live with us and to be one with us One Whom we cannot know without loving Him, grant that we may so know and love Him that we shall see Him everywhere and in every one; that so our whole life may be lifted up and glorified by our fellowship with Him, even Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTIETH WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 25:31–46.

We linger over this passage, returning to it again and again, because we need to stand in its light, though we stand there condemned.

It has a message not alone for the individual, but for the social order. Read James Russell Lowell's poem, "A Parable." It is an application of the chapter to our social life.

It shows Christ coming again, acclaimed by His church, and by the statesmen and leaders. But He is sorrowful and displeased. "Why?" they ask.

> " 'Behold Thy images, how they stand
> Sovereign and sole throughout our land.'
> Then Christ set forth an artisan,
> A low-browed, haggard, hungry man;
> And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
> Pushed from her feebly want and sin.
> These set He in the midst of them;
> And, as they drew back their garment's hem,
> For fear of defilement, 'Lo, here,' said He,
> 'The images ye have made of me.' "

Read the whole poem, and then pray for us all.

O God, Who lovest all men, and hatest with a holy indignation all the cruelties, injustice, and callous neglect that press so heavily upon masses of them, and keep them down in the dust, deliver us who are favoured from our individual and corporate selfishness, that all men and women and children may be delivered from their bondage into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTIETH WEEK, WEDNESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 26:6–13.

A truth shines out from this story which our age sorely needs. We are so taken up with method and efficiency that we forget the need of grace and charm and courtesy. We leave out the personal touch.

Every practical consideration was on the side of the disciples who indignantly protested that the ointment ought to have been sold and given to the poor. But life is more than can be met and ministered to by practical considerations. A home lives not by bread alone, or money alone, but by personal love, loyalty, and grace. A church lives, not by good works alone, and social service and community effort, but by beautiful worship, and heart fellowship. Both "strength and beauty" are in God's Sanctuary.

Life is more than meat. Life needs grace, beauty, affection, the personal touch. In an age devoted to doing, Christians are needed who have the spirit of the alabaster box.

O God, Who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our

hearts such love towards Thee that we, loving Thee above all things, may count it joy to offer our choicest treasures to Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTIETH WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
MATTHEW 26:26–28.

The question has troubled some sensitive souls—why should Jesus, Who cared so little for the outward and so much for the spiritual, have chosen as His memorial so essentially outward, common, and physical a thing as eating and drinking?

Was it not because He would have His followers remember always that His religion has to do with real life—not with thoughts and emotions and aspirations merely, but with "small experiences of every day, concerns of the particular hearth and home"? He would have us think of His religion always as "something not too high or good for human nature's daily food."

It may be that we, in making a solemn ceremony of this memorial, setting it in a church with costly vessels and stately surroundings, have gone too far away from the original simplicity. Perhaps our Lord sees the truest observance of His memorial when a family, or a group of friends, sits down to eat and drink, and pauses a moment to remember Him and give thanks in His name.

Our Christianity is for every day, and for the humblest parts of our life. That is the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

O God our Father, help us, knowing that our life is hid with Christ in Thee, to set our affections on eternal realities, living and walking in the Spirit, putting off all malice and

unkindness, and putting on a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness; and above all love, which is the bond of perfectness. And whatsoever we do, in word or deed, may we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. AMEN.

FIFTIETH WEEK, FRIDAY

Read
I CORINTHIANS 11:23–26.

This is one of the very few places in the letters of Paul in which he tells us anything about Jesus. And what he tells us is most significant: "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, gave thanks."

Such was the spirit of our Lord. On that darkest of nights, the night when He suffered betrayal, treachery, desertion, the bitterest experiences life holds, He yet gave thanks when He prayed.

Such is the true spirit of the Sacrament. "Eucharist" is a beautiful name for it. "Eucharist," means thanksgiving. We keep the sacramental feast best when we come to it in the spirit of thankfulness.

Such should be our spirit everywhere. "In everything give thanks," says Paul. He had caught the spirit of Christ and of the true Christian.

O God our Father, source of all that is good, help us to pray always and not to faint, in everything to give thanks, offering up the sacrifice of praise continually, possessing our souls in patience, and learning in whatsoever state we are therein to be content; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Master. AMEN.

FIFTIETH WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 26:36–46.

Jesus, in His agony and stress, prayed three times, "saying the same words." How it comforts us, when we would pray and have no words to utter but those we have said again and again, to find the very Master Who warned us against "vain repetitions," "saying the same words."

They were not "vain" repetitions. They were the profound utterances of His very soul. Such should our prayers be. The words said make little difference. At the greatest and most critical moments of life simple words are best.

Some one who watched with Luther all through the night before he faced the Diet at Worms, said that over and over he cried out, "O God, help me"; "Lord Jesus, help me."

Let us not be afraid of simple prayers, oft-repeated, if the heart is in them. It may mean only, as it did with Jesus in this crisis, that we are coming to God "in spirit and in truth."

O God, who searchest the heart and knowest what is the mind of the spirit, have mercy upon our childishness; and, when words fail, and we know not what to say or what to think, be pleased to accept our poor, stumbling, oft-repeated prayers, and help our souls through them to come into fellowship with Thy good Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 26:36–46.

What was the real answer to Jesus' praying? Was the cup taken from Him? It was pressed to His lips, and He drank it to the dregs.

Then was His prayer unanswered? Watch Him, and see! Sidney Lanier gives a picture of what came out of that agony of prayer:

"Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent.
Out of the woods my Master went,
Well content."

Life was as hard, as bitter, as cruel, as ever. But He was different. In between that spent condition, and that "contentment" which meant inward grace to meet all that life could bring, lay prayer; and the answer to prayer was in the new spirit in which He faced life. There you and I find the true answer to prayer.

O God, help us to call upon Thee with a great and unfailing faith, that expects great things. Yet suffer us not to be so set on outward things that we shall gauge by them the results and values of our Communion with Thee. Fulfill to us Thy glorious promise that they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and by Thy grace make us more than conquerors through Him that loves us. AMEN.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK, MONDAY

Read
MATTHEW 26:36–46.

Would you see the true value and power of prayer? Watch Jesus as He moves through those closing scenes, see how He keeps ever aloft His banner of unfailing and generous love. Not once does He fail. With searching but kindly words He appeals to Judas. With a loving look He recalls Peter from his shameful denial. He looks at His sleeping disciples only to judge them kindly: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He has consideration for Pilate, He prays for His crucifiers, He takes thought for His mother, His disciples, the robber hanging by His side.

Here shines out the glory of our Lord, surpassing that of all other leaders of men. He lived as He said men should live.

Out of His praying grew His steadfast conduct, His faithfulness to what He knew to be His Father's will. That is the supreme value and result of prayer.

O God, the Giver of all good, so work upon us that we shall desire above all other blessings the grace of faithfulness, the power to live according to Thy will, whatever temptation or trial may assail us or try to lead us astray from Thy holy will. Enable us ever to live by what we know to be Thy will; and so to enter into eternal life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK, TUESDAY

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." MATTHEW 26:41.

He does not say, "Watch and pray, *when* ye enter into temptation." Jesus holds up prayer and watchfulness as preventive. We are to be prayerful and watchful in order that our lives may be guarded against temptation.

They in whom is the spirit of true prayer and watchfulness pass safely by temptations that ruin other souls. The doors are open, but they do not "enter in." Prayer brings to the soul a certain divine immunity; one walks safely through perils, avoids pitfalls, passes by the haunts that wreck men's lives, often unaware of the dangers that have lined the wayside.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

Thanks be to Thee, O God, that Thou art a refuge, and a very present help in trouble. But thanks be to Thee even more, O Thou Great and Holy and Loving Friend, that Thou art our strength; that through fellowship with Thee comes into the soul a health and wholeness that gives immunity, and readiness to walk through life with joyfulness, in Thy light seeing light and in Thy presence fearing no evil. Praise be to Thy holy name for the gift of grace in Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"Put up thy sword; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." MATTHEW 26:52.

How cheap and sophistical, in the light of this uncompromising statement, seem all the plausible arguments against

disarmament, all the high-sounding words about "self-defence," and the necessity of "preparedness."

Jesus would not be defended by the use of weapons. Let all who glorify war face that decisive fact. Let every one who piously quotes the earlier command of the Master, "Let him that hath no sword, sell his cloak and buy one," take the full meaning of this later and utter discarding of the sword.

Jesus would not use the weapons of war. Neither should His Church. Nor should Christian nations. Let no one who trusts in the sword, or in "reeking tube and iron shard," invoke the name of Christ!

O God, Who through Thy Son, our Lord, hast called us unto peace and brotherliness, give us a holy hatred for war and its ways and weapons, and a holy passion for their utter destruction. Help us to defend His law of love above all other treasures and sanctities; and to keep our hands clean from whatever He would not use. AMEN.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK, THURSDAY

Read
LUKE 22:31, 32, 61.

Out of the story of those last agonizing hours comes a wonderful example of patient care for a friend, that shames and inspires us. Had we been in Jesus' place, we might have felt fully justified in forgetting all others in concern for ourselves; most of all we might have left Peter to wrestle for himself over his own weaknesses and faults.

But Jesus warned him, prayed for him, and then, at the critical moment, turned from His own distress and agony to give him a loving thought and a loving look.

Think what the world owes to Peter! And, but for Jesus' unfailing help at a crisis in his life, Peter might have been irretrievably lost.

"Oh, may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In lives made better by their presence, live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of noble rectitude; in scorn
Of miserable deeds that end with self.
May I be
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty,
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense.
So may I join the choir invisible,
Whose music is the gladness of the world."

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK, FRIDAY

"And He gave him no answer: not even to one word." MATTHEW 27:14.

All through these tragic scenes note the silence of Jesus. He opens His mouth only to speak to God out of the depths of His soul, or to speak to those about Him Whom He might help or comfort.

How hard it is to keep still! When injustice is done us, when we suffer, when pain racks us, when friends fail, how we cry out and complain. He, though "led as a lamb to the slaughter," yet "opened not His mouth."

To be Christlike is to be uncomplaining, to suffer in silence. If we thus kept still when we suffer, speaking out only to

pray or to help, would we not be better witnesses to Christ than we have ever been?

O Thou God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, but in silence committed Himself unto Thy care, give us hearts to love as He loved, and to live as He lived, yea, to suffer and die as He suffered and died, without failing in trust toward Thee or in love to all mankind. In His name. AMEN.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK, SATURDAY

Read
MATTHEW 27:46.

Read also
LUKE 23:46.

Jesus had a consciousness of direct fellowship with God such as you and I have never had. Yet, when He needed all the comfort and strength and courage that the consciousness of God could bring, He went for it to the Word of God.

The anguish of His soul found expression in the words of the Psalmist, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?" There are times when we are deeply glad that Jesus cried out, "My God, *Why?*" It was not all clear to Him. But even then He cried out in words from the Bible He knew and loved.

And then He breathed out His soul in another word from the Psalms: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

If the Bible could thus comfort Him, can I, dare I, neglect it?

O Thou God revealed in Jesus Christ, Who was and is the truth incarnate, and the Teacher of the faithful, let Thy

Spirit Which was in Him overshadow us in reading and studying Thy Word, and conform our thoughts to Thy Revelation, that, learning of Thee with honest hearts, we may become rooted and grounded in Thee; through Thy Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK, SUNDAY

Read
MATTHEW 27:46.

Read also
LUKE 23:46.

There is something about the name "God" that suggests mystery and awe. Clouds and darkness are round about Him. All the thoughts and theories, the speculations and doubts, of men rise up like a thick fog as we try, in moments of trouble and anguish, to find God.

But Jesus came to teach men to say "Father" where they had said "God"; to think of God in terms of Fatherhood.

It is solemnly significant and inspiring to watch Him in this crisis of the Cross; to hear Him cry out "My God, *Why?"* and then to hear Him as, turning to the dearer and more familiar thought of God, He says, *"Father,* into Thy hand I commend my spirit." He found refuge and comfort and strength in the fact of God's Fatherhood. There we too may rest and be secure.

O God, Eternal Mystery, help us to adore Thee, and to stand abashed and awed in Thy Holy Presence. But grant us also the grace to know Thee as children know a loving and gracious father, able and ready to help us; and to come to Thee in the joy of holy confidence, to be cheered by Thy

love, and encouraged by Thy goodness, and inspired by Thy fellowship, ever more and more unto eternal life. AMEN.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK, MONDAY

"He saved others; himself he could not save." MATTHEW 27:42.

They meant it as a jibe. But it was a crown of glory. They judged that He was on the cross because of weakness, inability to escape the fate His enemies had prepared for Him. But He was there because of strength, because of moral inability to leave His work undone, and the saving of human life incomplete, in order to spare Himself suffering and death.

Life takes that form at times; we must choose either to spare ourselves at the price of leaving our God-given work undone, or to go on and do the will of God, though it involves an unsparing use of ourselves.

Do we at such times follow the Christ of the Cross? It is a question each of us must face in the silent, hidden places of his own conscience.

O God, Who art revealed, in a glory transcending that of suns and stars, in the suffering and death of Thy Son, our Lord, teach us and empower us to follow Him even when following means taking His path of unsparing self-sacrifice; that so our little lives may have in them something of that attractive power by which He, lifted up, draws all unto Thee. AMEN.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK, TUESDAY

Read
MATTHEW 28:16–20.

"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth."

It is a glorious thing to believe that Jesus has such authority. It heartens us in our work for His Kingdom.

But, like all great truths, it is dangerous and harmful when misapplied. It has been so easy to say, "Jesus has all authority, and He is the Head of the Church. Therefore the Church has all authority." It has been easy to think of Him as a source of power which we can tap for the carrying out of our programs and the establishment of our creeds and convictions.

Remember, O Christians; and remember, O Church; it it *Jesus* Who has this authority. And only a Christian, or a church, that humbly and completely tries to live and work in His spirit, in His way, for His ends, under His guidance, can invoke His power. God forgive us all for our readiness to misuse, shamefully sometimes, His saving and inspiring grace.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy name, and set forward the coming of Thy Kingdom. AMEN.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK, WEDNESDAY

"Go ye, and make disciples of all nations." MATTHEW 28:19.

Here is set forth, simply and unmistakably, the aim of Christians in their missionary work. Not to "evangelize

the world in a generation"; not to convert as many souls as possible, and then leave them without care for their nurture; not to be content with preaching the Word. Some Christians have been content with such a mission; and the disastrous effects of such a policy and program are painfully apparent.

But Jesus tells us to "make disciples" everywhere; we know what He meant; for He had disciples, and we know what He did for them. Patiently He trained them, as in a school. He saw the task as a long, steady, never-ending cultivation. Such is the true missionary work of the Christian Church—to make disciples.

Blessed Lord, Who didst become a learner, even through suffering, that Thou mightest become our Saviour and Teacher, and Who still dost call Thy followers to gather Thy disciples in all nations, grant unto all that labour in Thy Kingdom on earth that, taught by the Holy Spirit, they may be apt to teach and wise to win those who come within their influence; that so there may grow up in all lands a generation of holy men and women to bear witness unto Thee, and to live in the way of Thy blessed will. AMEN.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK, THURSDAY

"Baptizing them into the name." MATTHEW 28:19.

Do we not find here a strong suggestion that the business of the messenger of Christ to non-Christian lands and people is not to bring them a God of Whom they know nothing, but rather to help them to know fully the God they already feel and know dimly? They are to make known His name. Their aim is that expressed in the noble words of Paul,

"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

You have been conversing with a stranger, and finding the intercourse helpful and interesting. Then some one tells you his name, and lets you know about the real person. How it lights up your knowledge!

Some one has well reminded us that the word "God" is a frame, which derives its meaning and value from the picture set in it. Christian missions go to non-Christian lands, not to bring a frame, but to show that the only picture that fits perfectly the frame is that of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

O Spirit of the Living God, Who hast never left Thyself without witness, but hast drawn into true fellowship with Thyself those in every land who have truly sought Thee, give to Thy servants who go throughout the world in the name of Jesus the deep desire to make fully known to all true seekers after Thee Thy true nature as revealed in Him; fill them with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that they may lovingly win all men to Thee through Him. AMEN.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK, FRIDAY

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." MATTHEW 28:20.

Once again, in this great final commission, we find the emphasis, found all through the Gospel, on the importance of the words of Christ, on His way of life. Our Lord does not lay upon His Church the duty of teaching particular systems of doctrine, or particular theories of Church order, or any other part of that elaborate system of traditional

Christianity which bulks so large in the view of many Christians. All He tells us to teach is "that which He has told us"—His way, His commands.

And above all other words and commands of His rises that one new commandment of love.

Would not a church which so construed its mission be different from the Christian Church as it now exists?

Might it not be more truly the body of Christ?

Should we not pray and work for such a Church?

Father of all, we humbly pray to Thee for Thy Church universal. Fill it with all truth, peace, power, and love. Where it is corrupt, purge it; where it is in error, direct it; where it is superstitious, rectify it; where anything is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen and confirm it; where it is divided and rent asunder, unify it; where it is in want, furnish it; and make it the pure instrument of Thy holy and saving will in Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK, SATURDAY

"And lo, I am with you always." MATTHEW 28:20.

Here is the assurance we need. We do not go out alone to bring the world to God in Christ. He Who was with the disciples in Galilee, He Who started the Kingdom, is ever with His people, "the Christ of all the roads on which men walk toward the Kingdom of God." Luke was right when he called his Gospel a record of what Jesus "began to do and teach." He is still doing and teaching; the long future will but bring out more clearly the figure of "the Christ that is to be."

But there is a solemn warning here, as well as a heartening

assurance. Our only hope of success is so to live and work that Christ will ever be in fellowship with us. And that can be only as we walk in His way, and follow Him.

O Thou Blessed God revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord, keep us from thinking of Thee as far back in the past, or as far ahead in the future. May we know and feel Thee as a dear and inspiring Presence ever with us; and to that end guard us, by Thy good Spirit, from straying into by-paths where the light of Christ's presence is dimmed; keep us ever in His light and in His fellowship. For His name's sake. AMEN.

365th DAY

"Lo, I am with you all the days," MATTHEW 28:20.

That is what Jesus really said, "all the days." It is as if He took up each day, one after the other, in their long procession, and said, "I shall be with you on that day, and that, and that." Not only on holy days, but on common days; not only on Sundays, but on week days; not only on days of prayer, but on days of business; not only on bright days, but on dark days; on all the days, He is with us. There is the greatest blessing a Christian knows. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable, everyday gift of His blessed, saving presence.

Almighty God, Who fillest all things with Thy presence, and Who dost draw near to us in Jesus Christ, we beseech Thee, of Thy great love, to keep us near unto Thee this day and every day; that in all our ways and doings we may remember that Thou seest us, and may always have grace to know and perceive what things Thou wouldst have us do,

and strength to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

366th DAY

"And lo, I am with you." MATTHEW 28:20.

Look once more at that brief but wonderful saying. Did you note the opening word, "and"? It ties what follows with what has gone before. The promise of the presence of our Lord with us all our days is conditioned on our faithfulness in seeing that all men everywhere are given a chance to know His name, to become His disciples, to be taught His will and words and commandments.

Only a church that longs and strives to take Christ to all the world, only a Christian who does his best and his utmost to make Christ known to all men, has a right to hope for the blessing of His presence in our life.

O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hast blessed me with the knowledge of Thyself, fill me, I pray, with the deep and earnest purpose of bringing that glad knowledge of Thee, which has come to me through Jesus Christ, to all people everywhere; that so I may realize to the full the joy of Thy presence with me along the way of my pilgrimage; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

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